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NGC
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ZELDA
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MARIO
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MAN SIZE ROOSTER
SECRET EXTRA SONG
BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S
ARE YOU READY FOR LOVE
POKEMON THEME
I'M A SLAVE 4 YOU
DON'T LET ME GET ME
LA BAMBA
LA CUCHARACHA
BOOMBASTIC
SHINY HAPPY PEOPLE
32 NEW SONGS
EINE KLEINE NACHTMUSIK
LOSING MY RELIGION
GREAT! RED HANDS!
NEED NEW ONES?
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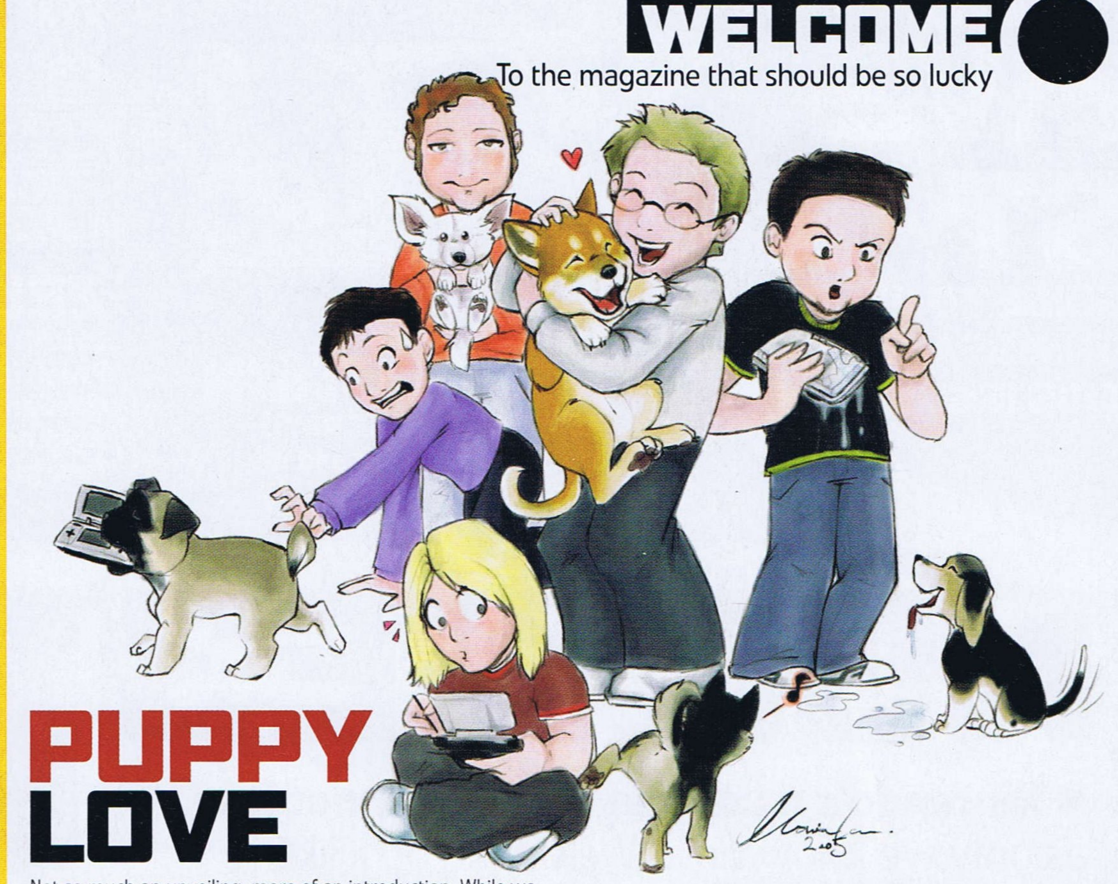
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PUPPY LOVE

Not so much an unveiling, more of an introduction. While we waited outside Nintendo's E3 press conference, our palms were dripping with the sweat of anticipation. On the way out, though, our mouths were dry with disappointment. We spent the evening discussing Nintendo's next-gen strategy with Dave, our faithful/virtual Welsh Corgi, and awoke the following morning with a surprising spring in our step. Was it so bad that Nintendo didn't show any Revolution footage? What would we have rather had? Dubious 'in-game' footage that inflated our expectations? Or the quietly confident Nintendo that we know and love, holding their cards close to their chest, ready to deal a more surprising hand when the time is right? We'll take the latter option any time. Nintendo, in our opinion, have done the right thing in leaving the mudslinging to the little boys in the playground, while concentrating on what's important – delivering compelling content that proves that any next-generation willy-waving is a touch premature.

Just look at Nintendogs – N64-era graphics brought to life with genuinely innovative hardware and a touch of magic. The real revolution has already begun…

TURN OVER THE PAGE!
For an introduction to Nintendo's forthcoming beautifully sleek Revolution.

AND SO IT BEGINS...
TALKING ABOUT A REVOLUTION

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!
Go to page 80 to find out how you can get **NGC** delivered direct to your door, before it hits the news stands. With a free copy of *Splinter Cell* too.

WHY WE'RE No.1 FOR NINTENDO

NGC's the result of over a decade of gaming genius – so you're the best-informed Nintendo gamer around.



■ First there was the SNES, and Super Play came out alongside it – fanboys rejoiced.

■ A new machine meant a new magazine – but one with the same high standards.

■ Now we've got Gamecube, and you've got **NGC**. That's 13 years of Ninty love right there.

NGC'S **FIVE STAR GUIDE TO WHAT'S UNMISSABLE THIS ISSUE!**



IT'S THE REVOLUTION

AND, OOH, ISN'T IT TIDY…
It's black, it's sleek and it's bloody heavy too…



ZELDA

OH. MY. GOD.
Proof, if any were needed, that the Gamecube is plenty powerful right now, thank you very much. Four pages of Link-based bliss.

NGC @ E3



Nintendo's next-gen offering annotated as only we know how. We think you'll like it.

PAGE 6







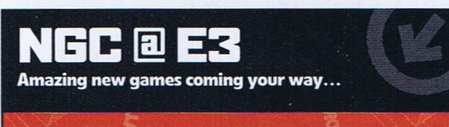
DONKEY KONGA 2
POPMUNGOUS UK VERSION
We slap ourselves raw in pursuit of the perfect beat.



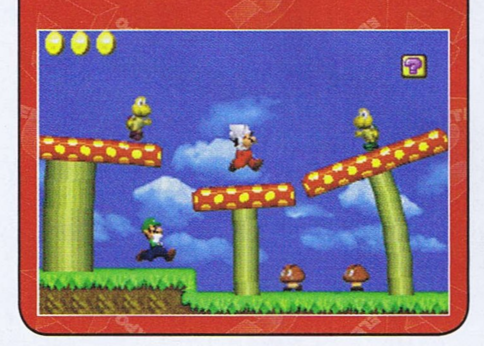
THE ART OF BOX
WHAT THE? WHO THE? EH?
See the pretty boxes and feel the hardcore learns...

WHAT'S IN NGC?
Everything worth knowing for this month – and beyond...

NGC @ E3
Amazing new games coming your way...







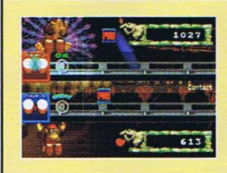
NGC @ E3
...and some more amazing games!

EXTENDED PLAY
Getting more from your favourite games.

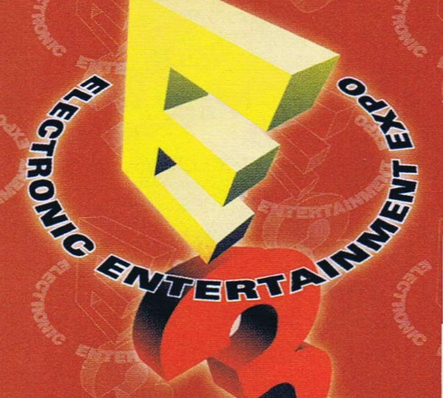




REVIEWS
Some games. Some good. Some bad.







AND SO IT BEGINS...



TALKING ABOUT A REVOLUTION

Nintendo's superconsole is unveiled at last...

This is Revolution – a machine so sleek and grown-up, it looks like it belongs in the pages of a home cinema mag, not **NGC**. But this really is Nintendo's next console.

We're all going to have to wait a while before we learn essential details such as how powerful it will be, what kind of games we'll be playing on it, when we can buy it or even what the controller looks like. All Nintendo boss Satoru Iwata was prepared to reveal was the console housing and the details you'll read on the following pages. Start saving those pennies for some time in 2006...



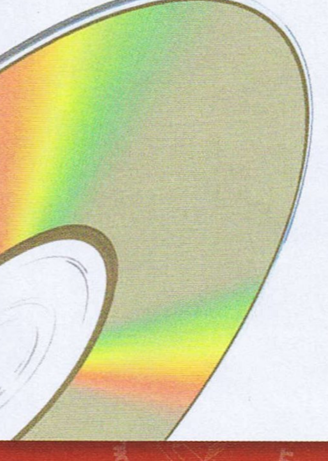


Another year, another E3 show. Every May, the games industry decamps to sunny Los Angeles, where the latest wares are demonstrated in the sweaty catacombs of the Staples Centre, and the three hardware manufacturers attempt to show how high their new consoles can wee. Except this time, Nintendo kept its family jewels tucked safely away from the public gaze.

While Sony and Microsoft bandied 'real world' performance figures for machines that don't actually exist yet, all Nintendo showed was a prototype housing for the new Revolution. Having picked it up and chucked it from hand to hand, we can assure you it felt heavy and expensive.

But so fearful is Nintendo of having Revolution's big surprises stolen by a competitor (after all, the other consoles are still at an early enough stage to nick any great ideas) everything from the controller design to the details of the chips inside that tiny box remained top secret.

We've been closer to it than most. In the depths of Nintendo's stand, behind two layers of security guards, and under the watchful gaze of an ogre who could have crushed us with his little finger, five colourful prototypes were displayed. We opened their flaps, poked at their ports, and weren't allowed to take any photos. Everything we know about Revolution is right here, and everything else we saw at E3 is on the subsequent 20 pages...

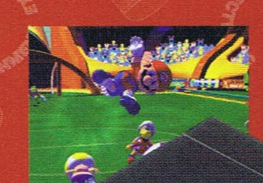


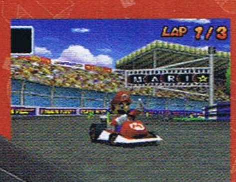
HAXXESS ALL AREAS

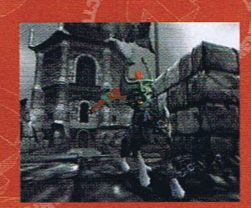


Satoru Iwata claimed that Revolution will be suited to expensive masterpieces and low-budget, independent titles alike – a bold statement from the president of a company which, thanks to its licensing contracts in the 1980s, helped ensure that only big companies could afford to publish games.

E3 CONTENTS







THE FACTS

POWERFUL

Because Nintendo released no tech specs, we don't know how much memory the machine will have or how meaty its graphics chip and CPU will be. Any figures you may hear bandied about – 'X' times as powerful as Gamecube, half a zillion polygons per second – are completely made up. The graphics chip is from ATI, the processor is from IBM, they're codenamed Hollywood and Broadway respectively, and sadly that's all anybody knows at the moment. We'd be surprised if the finished console doesn't have a similar spec to its rivals, but anything could happen.

WIRELESS

Like the DS, the Revolution is set up for WiFi networking. If you have broadband and a wireless router, Revolution will sniff out your connection and dig its wireless tendrils deep into the internet, seeking other players as well as content stored on servers at Nintendo HQ.

RETRO

Revolution will play everything Nintendo has ever made – or at least a selection of the most popular titles. NES, SNES and N64 games can be downloaded and stored on SD cards or the console's internal memory. Gamecube games will be loaded from discs, as usual.

FLASH MEMORY

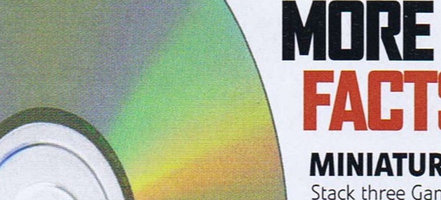
There's 512MB of flash memory on board, which is roughly equivalent to 250 Memory Card 251s. This will be used for storing saved data and downloaded games. Developers could also provide extra levels and other updates, downloadable for a small fee.



Getting a game into the shops is something few independent companies can do without the assistance of one of the giant publishers. Reading between the lines, this would appear to suggest that Nintendo will publish smaller titles online, making them available for download direct to the Revolution console. An average Gamecube title, stripped of expensive FMV, would fit comfortably in the console's 512MB flash memory.

However, this raises the spectre of piracy, which is why all Revolution games will be encoded with Nintendo's proprietary digital rights management software. Gamecube has remained a pirate-free zone thanks to its mini-DVD format, but cracking a console that can play every single Nintendo game and allows for easy transfer of data to a PC via SD cards will be the top of every hacker's priority list. A similar problem also exists on the Xbox, and Nintendo's solution may well be similar to Microsoft's – modified machines are detected via firmware updates, and offending users will be banned from using the online services.

If this open system, which Nintendo calls 'dynamic development architecture' works well and isn't abused by the hackers, then it's unlikely that Revolution owners will ever be short of new games.



MORE FACTS

MINIATURE

Stack three Gamecube boxes on top of each other. That's how tiny the Revolution prototype is, and the final version may well be even smaller. If you lose it, simply whistle and it will bleep to let you know where it's hiding.



DVD VIDEO

To play DVDs you will need to buy a key which will plug into the little flap under the disc slot. It's purely a cost-saving measure, as a licensing fee must be paid to the DVD Forum – the organisation that controls the rights to the DVD format – for each DVD player sold. By selling a separate bit of hardware to enable DVD playback, Revolution isn't classed as a DVD player. You will pay the licensing fee if you buy the key.

VERTICAL

Revolution is perfectly happy laid flat or standing on its side. To prevent it getting blown over by the fans from any other consoles you may be planning to buy, it slots into a silvery stand which holds it safely at a jaunty angle.



CONTROLLERS

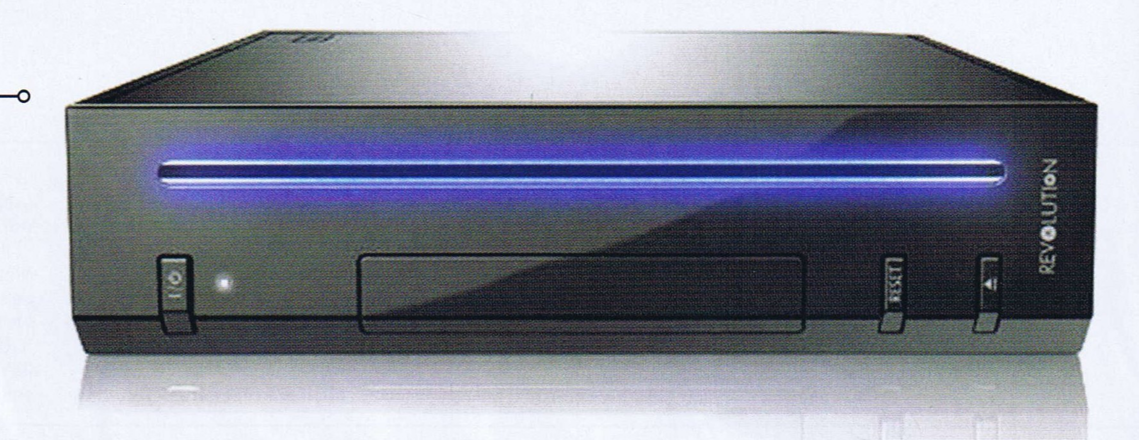
The new wireless controller is so secret, Nintendo probably hasn't even invented it yet. Because it might not be suited to retro games, you can plug Gamecube controllers into the ports underneath one of the side panels. You can bet they'll release Revolution versions of the NES, SNES and N64 controllers too.

SD CARDS

When the 512MB internal storage becomes overcrowded, you can archive your data on SD memory cards. At around £70 per 1GB, they're getting cheaper by the month, but if Nintendo's rights management system allows, you'll be able to transfer the data to a PC for long-term storage.

USB 2.0

Two high-speed USB 2.0 ports will enable you to connect peripherals such as cameras, printers, special controllers and so on.





SMASH BROS.

Confirmed as a launch title. With online play and, no doubt, an even bigger roster of characters than *Super Smash Bros Melée*, this sounds like a guaranteed hit to us.

FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES

Online multiplayer gaming would make this a far more appealing title than the GC version, with its expensive GBA link. Square-Enix is working on it right now.

ZELDA

There's to be no rest for Eiji Aonuma, as the Zelda producer will be making fresh adventures for the new machine. A Four Swords multiplayer affair seems quite likely to begin with.

MARIO

Mario 128 was a no-show on Gamecube at E3. We know it's in development and we know there's going to be a Mario title for Revolution's launch. This could be it.

DONKEY KONG

Confirmed as one of the big names being wheeled out for the new console. We'd be more than happy with a new *Konga*, but this will probably be a platformer.

METROID

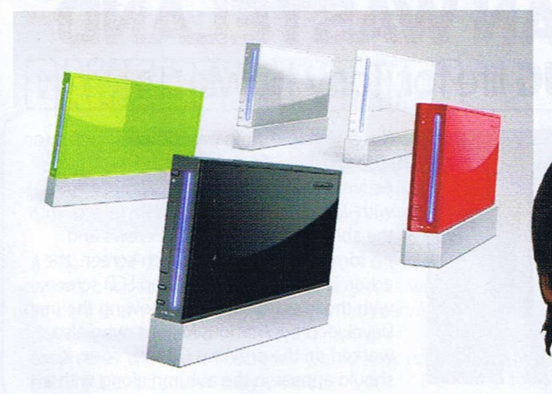
A brief video clip of Samus standing in front of her upgraded spacecraft illustrated the arrival of a new Metroid title on Revolution.

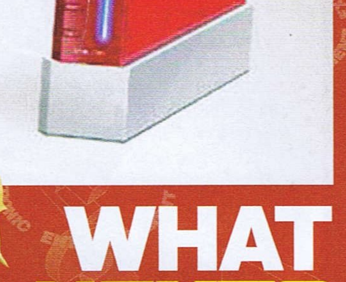
NEW MIYAMOTO GAME

Shigsy is putting his team to work on a completely new game, which could be referring to *Mario 128* or, hopefully, something we've never heard of before.

UNITED COLOURS

Five potential colours. The white one looks like an Apple Mac, the green one is gorgeous and the black one made us dribble.





WHAT NEXT?

Other than what you've seen in these pages, Nintendo revealed none of Revolution's secrets. Microsoft and Sony played their full hands, showing pre-rendered concept footage, tech specs and more. Nintendo stayed relatively quiet.

In fact we still don't know exactly what the machine will look like or even what it's going to be called. Satoru Iwata said the version you see on these pages is just a prototype, and the finished console is likely to be smaller and possibly a different colour.

Revolution remains a codename, although we wouldn't be surprised to see it stick – the logo is certainly stylish enough.

One thing we're itching to know is how Revolution will compare to the other machines in terms of technical capability. And what we really want is a glimpse of its controller – just a half-second peek would be fine. But there must be a good reason for keeping this stuff secret, and short of sneaking past the robot death squads that guard the inner sanctum of Nintendo HQ, we're not going to learn anything else until Shigsy and the gang are ready to tell us.

With the actual machine still very much a work in progress, Nintendo's bosses are keen to know what their fans want from it: different colours, different designs, special features, the controller… What would make Revolution *your* perfect Nintendo console? Send us your ideas and requests for Nintendo. Write them, draw them, make them out of modelling clay or whatever you fancy. We'll print the best ones right here in a couple of months.

Send your ideas/designs to:
Talking about a Revolution
NGC Magazine
30 Monmouth Street
Bath, BA1 2BW



DS ONLINE
WIRELESS AND CASHLESS

Play Mario Kart DS online at home or out and about.

Half an hour into their E3 conference, Nintendo answered a question that has been hanging around in the ether ever since we first heard about the DS's WiFi capability: how will the wireless network work? As usual, the elongated form of Reggie Fils-Aime was the man with the answer – and a whole lot more – up his capacious sleeves.

What Reggie conjured up from beneath his cuffs was the Nintendo WiFi Connection, an all-singing, all-dancing online server that will allow DS players worldwide to link up to chat, battle and compare high scores. Best of all, this service will be completely free. That's right, once the system rolls out, which will be at some point in the next six months, anyone who has access to a WiFi connection will be able to find their friends or be matched up automatically with strangers with a similar skill rating.

With five million DS consoles already sold worldwide, the double-barrelled giant promised that: "We're looking to penetrate 90% of DS owners with our online service." Which is something that should be made a little easier since 25 developers are already lining up behind the new service. However, these companies will have the option to charge you for playing their games through Nintendo's WiFi Connection system.

ONLINE LINED UP

Despite the six month wait before the Nintendo WiFi Connection is up and running, Reggie also revealed that some big name games are already waiting in the wings to demonstrate just how great Nintendo's online service is going to be.

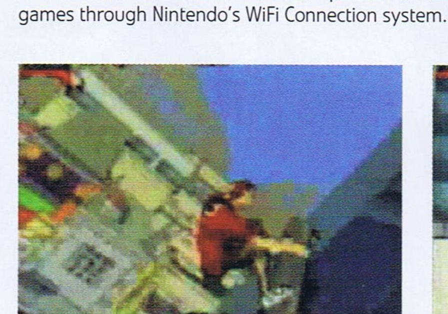
Mario Kart DS
This was already playable at the show in four-player online form against none other than Charles Martinet (the voice of Mario), who was in Seattle. It showed no signs of slowdown or juddering, even though one player was 954 miles away.

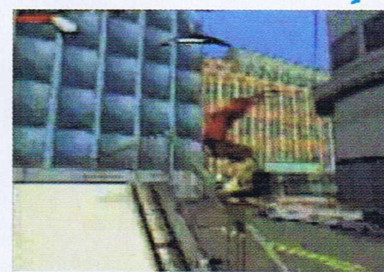


△ *The Connection interface wasn't in place yet, although Reggie promises that it will be kept simple.*

DSpeak
Although still in the concept stage, DSpeak will allow you to use the console as a mobile phone, with the internet providing the chance to chat to friends. Instead of the screen showing your face, Mario, or another Mushroom legend will appear to mouth the words that you say into the external microphone and earpiece combination.

Animal Crossing DS
Also being demo'd online, *Animal Crossing DS* showed how easy it will be to wander into each other's towns and either trade items or whack someone over the head with a shovel. Interaction was limited to simple actions like chatting and bumping, but hopefully more will be added by its autumn release.

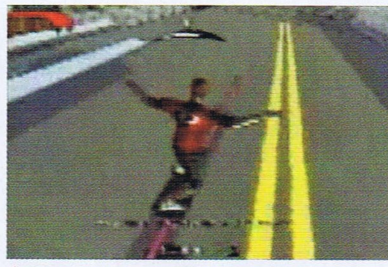




△ **The preview of the new Tony Hawk game wasn't playable at the conference. It was video only.**

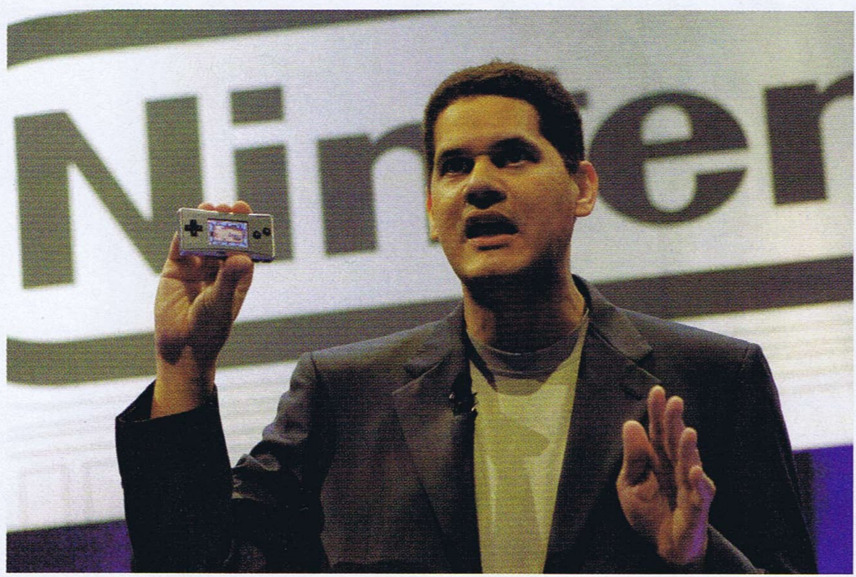
TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND

No more TH:UG life for Tony Hawk.



△ ***TH:AW* looks incredibly smooth in motion.**

Never a man to stop producing surprises (or stop growing), Reggie also revealed that Activision will be joining the WiFi revolution with *Tony Hawk's American Wasteland*. With the ability to form your own crews and perform tricks using the touch-screen, the action is played out on the top LCD screen, with the lower one mostly showing the map. Developed by Vicarious Visions, who also worked on the previous GBA versions, it should appear in the autumn along with a Gamecube and GBA version.



△ Reggie would probably have some difficulty with the Micro, just look at the size of those thumbs!

MICRO MACHINE

Reggie reveals the new GBA.

As if showing off one console wasn't enough, around half-way through the press conference, Reggie Fils-Aime revealed the tiniest Nintendo treat we have ever seen. Certainly better than the Pokémon Mini anyway. It's the new Game Boy Micro, and it's so small that you needed binoculars to see it in Reggie's massive hands.

Essentially a redesign of the GBA, the Micro is 10cm wide and 1.7cm thick. But the big news is that the 5cm back-lit screen will make your games brighter and sharper than ever. There will also be an adjustable brightness switch, so you can fiddle with the picture.

It was rumoured that the Micro would include WiFi technology for connectivity with Gamecube, but Nintendo have yet to comment on this. Nor did they comment on the gossip suggesting that it would be able to play MP3s.

FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME

What makes the Micro tick.

D-PAD

Unlike GBA SP, the D-pad doesn't click when you press it down. Instead it feels spongy.

CASE

You will be able to remove the face-plate and customise your Micro with mobile phone-style clip-on cases.

SELECT AND START BUTTONS

These are a bit fancier than usual as they glow a nice shade of blue when you turn your machine on.

CARTRIDGE SLOT

Like the GBA SP, the cartridges fit into the bottom of the machine. It will play all GBA games, but it won't be compatible with any Game Boy or Game Boy Color games.

THE SCREEN

As promised, it's much brighter than the GBA SP and the quality is comparable to the DS screen. At five centimetres wide, it's smaller than an SP screen, but that won't matter because it's as clear as polished crystal and 2.4 times brighter than the sun.

L AND R BUTTONS

These are larger and more comfortable to use than those on the GBA SP.

ACTION BUTTONS

Like the D-pad, the action buttons don't click when pressed. Obviously as it's so small, they are very close together. *[Duh! Ed]*

BATTERIES

Game Boy Micro will run on a rechargeable lithium-ion battery.

HEADPHONES

Great news: unlike the GBA SP, you won't need an adapter to plug in your headphones. Which is strange considering Nintendo claimed that the GBA SP was too small for a headphone socket…

GAME BOY EVOLVES



GAME BOY ADVANCE: 2000

While everyone marvelled at the amazing variety of new games – such as *Mario Kart*, *F-Zero*, and *Advance Wars* – the screen wasn't back-lit and as a result, some games were so dark that you could barely see what you were doing in broad daylight. Nintendo, however, assured us that back-lit screens would suck up battery life. Of course they would…

GAME BOY ADVANCE SP: 2003

After three years of tilting screens to catch the light, Nintendo finally listened to our complaints and redesigned the handheld with a front-lit screen. At last you could see where you were going in *Castlevania*. It also had a funky new flip-top design, although it's nowhere near as comfortable to hold as the original GBA.



GAME BOY MICRO: 2005

The Game Boy Micro is absolutely tiny. So tiny that the shovel-handed among us may find it frustrating. It also weighs the same as about 80 paperclips (we didn't put the paper clips and handheld on some scales – Nintendo told us this fascinating fact). It has an amazingly bright screen, is about the size of a NES pad, and is as comfortable to hold as the original GBA.



△ Link shows off his pearly whites, and grimaces for the fans.

△ This bit has been moved to sunset, for dramatic effect. It's nicer in orange.

△ Link exchanges sideways glances in Hyrule's equivalent of Clapham Common.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA TWILIGHT PRINCESS

We finally get our hands on the title the world has been waiting for since the launch of Gamecube.

With four segments of the game available to play, we got a good taste of what to expect later in the year. We weren't disappointed. It's the most impressive game of this console generation, and one of the reasons

"THIS IS WHY THEY DIDN'T SHOW ANY REVOLUTION SCREENSHOTS"

Nintendo didn't show any Revolution screenshots – they didn't want to overshadow what looks set to be the Gamecube's crowning glory.

Link begins the game as a humble shepherd, rounding up beasties in a farm outside the peaceful village of Toaru. Of course it doesn't remain peaceful for long, and the arrival of a marauding band of pig-faced bandits, the abduction of two locals (the mayor's daughter, Ilia and a boy called, erm, Colin) and the unlocking of a distinctly nasty twilight dimension prove the catalysts for our man's transformation from farmboy to hero.

Link pursues the bandits across Hyrule, culminating in a horseback battle that's as fast and hectic as something out of *Rogue Leader*. There's a showdown, and there can only be one winner, but it's merely the beginning of an adventure that producer Eiji Aonuma promises will outdo *Ocarina of Time* in every way imaginable...

△ The detail on Link's uniform is intricate and impressive.



WINDY
Check out the fancy new boomerang. It can lock onto almost anything and, if fully charged before firing, creates little whirlwinds as it flies. Naturally you'll be using this feature to solve many a wind-related puzzle.

CEL-OUT
Twilight Princess was originally based on the *Wind Waker* game engine. You can still see echoes of the previous Zelda title in the camera movement and some of the combat – successive sword strikes make the action freeze momentarily, for dramatic effect, as you build up a combo.

LIGHTY
Link can carry a lantern, for lighting up the surrounding area. Equipping it casts a warm glow in dark areas, but also attracts creatures of the night.

WOLFY
When Link crosses over into the twilight realm – a complete mirror of Hyrule – he turns into a wolf. He's initially imprisoned, then freed by a character called Midna. When you play as Link-wolf, Midna rides on your back, using her scarf to pick up items. Link-wolf is weaker than normal, but can communicate with animals and sniff out special items. This part was shown on video but wasn't included in the playable demo.

LURVE
For once, Link isn't besotted by Zelda. This is Ilia, daughter of the mayor of Taoru village, and during the early stages of the game Link gets plenty of teasing from his friends for trailing after her like a loyal puppy.

MONKEY MAGIC
The theme of this area, the Forest Temple, is monkeys. Good monkeys help Link solve puzzles and swing across chasms. Bad monkeys display their purple arses and taunt our hero from a safe distance.

PRINCESS
We reckon this is the Twilight Princess herself. Could be Zelda, but she appears to have dark hair under that hood. Anyway, she popped up in the video footage, locked away somewhere in the twilight world. Time for a rescue mission, Link.

BOSS
The Forest Temple boss brought the demo to a close. It looks like a couple of oversized Deku Babas at first, until striking them brings forth the beast they're attached to – the mother of all man-eating plants. You have to find a way to get some explosives from a hard-to-reach place into the hideous face of this gob-smackingly ugly colossus.

GET IN THERE, YOU BEAUTY

Actual gameplay snippets from the *Twilight Princess* E3 demo.



FINISH HIM
Knock down a weaker enemy and you can deliver a satisfyingly meaty finishing move. It means you don't have to spend much time hacking away at minor foes.

DA-DA-DA-DAA!
The treasure chest animation was one of the things we recall being hugely impressed by in Ocarina. But look at it now… just look at it! When we saw this, we wept for joy.

JOUSTING
Here's the showdown with the bandit chieftain, ending with the most cinematic Zelda moment since Link's swandive into the river in Ocarina. Staggeringly beautiful.

CAVALRY
A rampaging battle across the rolling plains of Hyrule. This is so fast, so detailed, so mind-blowingly busy, we wonder how the rest of the game can live up to it.

PLAYING THE GAME

Just how good is the new Zelda?

It's the little touches that make this more than just an extraordinarily beautiful game. There has clearly been a huge amount of love, sweat and talent expended on making *Twilight Princess* something truly special. For instance, the way the facial expressions from *Wind Waker* have been adapted to the more realistic graphical style, with a knowing glance between two characters here, and a wry smile there. It makes all the difference.

When you're battling the boar-riding bandits out on the plains, they gallop alongside Epona and try to herd you away from their boss. If you lead them over a jump they can't clear, they'll be catapulted from their saddles as their mounts screech to a halt. Riderless boars wander aimlessly or flock together like cattle while their unseated passengers flee before Epona's hooves. You can stop, get off the horse, and watch the fluid, unscripted behaviour of your foes as they roam an area that can't be far short of the size of *Wind Waker's* ocean. It's immense.

Because of the scale of the overworld, it's not surprising that the ground textures look a little blurry when under close inspection. There aren't many surface features either, although buildings crop up from time to time and the ground is rarely flat. There are some amazing weather effects to add an element of visual interest – clouds cast shadows on the ground, thunderstorms drench the characters, and so on. But in the areas we played, we were travelling so quickly and fighting so hard, there wasn't much time to admire the view. Apparently the full game will feature loads of horseback stuff – exploration, racing and other



△ He's staring at a monkey here, we think. There are loads of them in this temple.

△ Link gets his pixie clothes at an undisclosed point in the game.

△ Is Midna's scarf used for picking things up, like in Treasure's PS2 game *Freak Out?*

△ Duelling with the pigman. So, so beautiful...

challenges, as well as battles. If the E3 demo is anything to go by, we reckon you couldn't possibly have too much of it. It's the business.

In the opening village area we had to paddle a canoe to push a basket (containing a baby) back to the river bank. This bit had us drooling at the stunning water effects and cursing a camera that, in its present form, feels a bit too fast and loose. It was annoyingly hard to line up the canoe with the basket. Earlier in the same village area there was a scene where we had to herd goats into a shed by riding around on Epona, pressing A to 'whoop'. It was a decent enough challenge, but we sincerely hope they remove the gigantic YEE-HAW text that floats out of Link's head with every capture. Horrible. There's actually an awful lot of text on the screen throughout – as well as the usual context-sensitive commands that appear on the buttons in the top right corner, intrusive hints and instructions keep popping up along the bottom. The screenshots without text are specially posed by Nintendo, taken from development kits.

Generally, the few faults to be found in the demo were soon forgotten once we entered the dungeon area. The visual contrast between it and the field scene couldn't be stronger, with an amazingly rich environment – lovely textures and loads of details. The way the light falls on Link's face is stunning, and the way dust billows and floats in the air, and leaves are thrown up when bombs go off, brought tears to our eyes.

It was the best thing we saw at E3, and the 90-minute wait for a crack on one of the demo machines proved that we weren't the only people who thought so.

△ Remember this from the Gamecube version?

△ The map screen is fantastic for avoiding shells and dropping surgical bananas.

MARIO KART DS

More tracks than ever before plus internet play too!



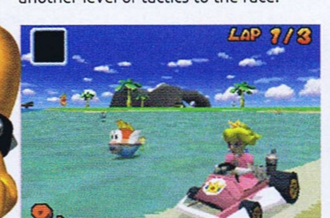
After the double-team antics and wacky vehicles of the Gamecube version, Mario Kart returns to its roots for on DS. This 100% go-kart edition brings back the hop manoeuvre, for clearing small gaps, avoiding hazards and starting powerslides. Plus it's fast, smooth and generally very impressive to see in action on a DS.

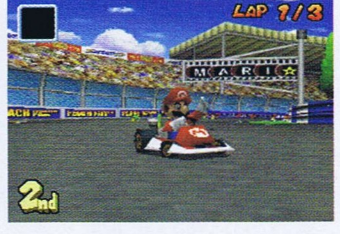
WHAT WE PLAYED...
The demo version had two cups available – Nitro and Retro. The Retro cup had Mario Circuit 1 from the SNES version, Moo Moo Farm from the N64, Peach Circuit from the GBA and Luigi Circuit from the Gamecube. The Nitro cup, named after Nintendo's early codename for DS, was made up of four brand new tracks, including one excellent ghost house level. The finished game will have 30 tracks, which sounds like a very generous number to us.

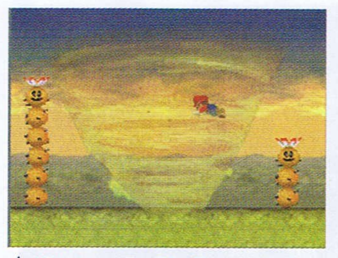
Eight-player races are fully supported using just one copy of the game, and you can play with up to three other people over the internet.

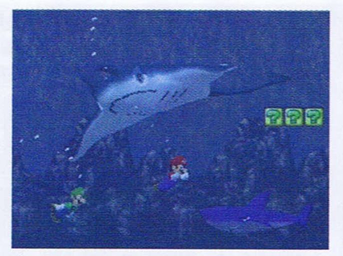
NGC VERDICT

It's the Mario Kart everyone's always wanted. It controls beautifully and it all just feels so right – like an old pair of slippers. It looks a treat too. In big screenshots (and on the monitors at the show) it looks a bit pump, but on the DS screen it's pin-sharp and crystal clear. Exactly what you want.
The demo posed a fair enough challenge (we came second and third in the cups) and proved fast enough for us not to moan about a lack of speed. The bottom screen, although just a map, works pretty well. You can see any weapons that are on your tail (great for taking out red shells etc) and is pretty nifty for blocking anyone coming from behind. It's a small thing, but we reckon this could add another level of tactics to the race.






△ *You get a nifty 3D effect as Mario gets swirled around in the vortex.*


△ *Well, the underwater levels on the SNES didn't look quite like this.*

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS

We've been waiting the best part of 15 years for this one. Sort of.

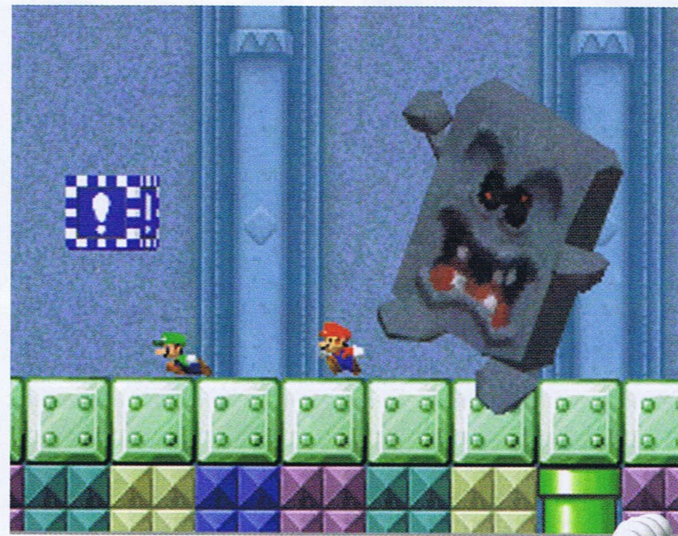


Despite being billed as the first new 2D Mario platformer since *Super Mario World* on the SNES, this uses 3D graphics throughout – you run through a 3D world on a fixed path. But unlike the loathsome *Pandemonium*, which pioneered this technique on PlayStation, there are are no flashy backgrounds or weird camera angles. The action is unapologetically old-fashioned.

The animation is obviously miles better than anything that would have been possible using hand-drawn sprites, and items – such as a super mushroom that inflates Mario to screen-filling proportions – have been added. The butt-slam move from *Mario 64* has also been included.

In the E3 demo, the lower screen displayed a guage showing your progress through the level, plus up to three stored items. Tapping the screen threw the items into the game world for Mario to collect.

A wireless two-player mode was demo'd, with Mario and Luigi racing and battling. Great fun, but something about the new look didn't seem quite right to us. Maybe it was the odd combination of 3D characters in a resolutely 2D world, but it seemed less vibrant than the SNES game. We're looking forward to spending a lot more time with this one.


△ *Thwomps take on a solid new look here. Althugh this one looks like he's covered in carpet, to avoid hurting our heroes.*


△ *Swinging in a strangely inverted world.*



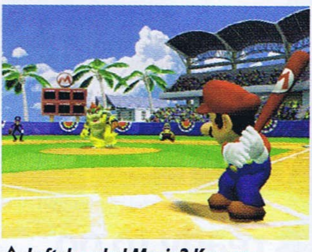
△ *Unlike anything we've ever seen before. This is going to be magic.*

MARIO PARTY 7

Bring a friend or seven to Mario's latest party.



The sixth one didn't really impress us with its voice 'recognition' gimmick, but that hasn't stopped Mario throwing yet another party. This time it has voice recognition and supports up to eight players – you share joypads for the mini-games, like in *Micro Machines*. Other than that, it all looks remarkably familiar. If you've got seven party-loving mates, though, this could be just what you need.


△ *Left-handed Mario? Ker-azy.*


△ *Peach is a lefty too. And ginger.*

MARIO BASEBALL

Swing, batter batter batter batter batter, swing! Well, why not?

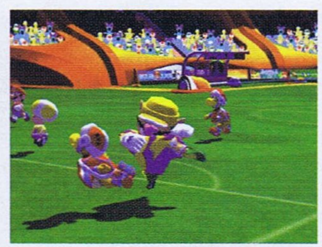


If you've played *Mario Power Tennis* you'll know exactly what to expect here – big special moves, characters with unique abilities and simple-but-deep gameplay. The E3 demo had some characters we've never seen revived in 3D form, such as the Hammer Bros. and Monty Mole. Why not put them in the football game too? We liked this a lot, but anyone who hated the specials in *Power Tennis* might have some issues with it…


△ *Yoshi – left-handed dino boy.*


△ *Have some of that, you freaks.*


Δ The goalie has some serious problems with personal grooming.

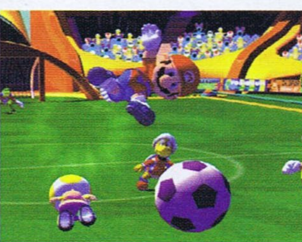

Δ If you get persistently fouled you'll earn better power-ups.

SUPER MARIO STRIKERS

You knew it had to happen…


We took some multi-goal tonkings at this, but we had fun anyway. The controls are easy and the power-ups aren't too intrusive – you only see them a handful of times in each match (more if you keep fouling). Like *Disney Sports Football* there's only one main character for each team, so Mario and DK have a bunch of nameless Koopas and Toads around them.

It's being made by some of the people behind *Sega Soccer Slam*, and is currently 25% complete with a mere three months of development to go. Better start sleeping in the office, guys.


Δ It's like Shaolin Soccer with Mario.

DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION MARIO MIX

One plumber and his busy feet.

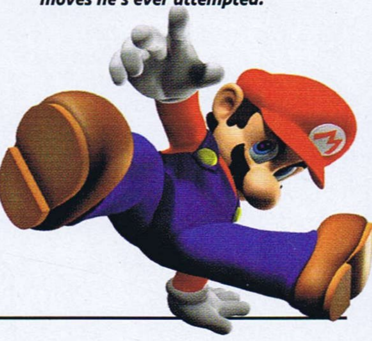


Δ There's really no need for any kind of a plot in a dancing game.



Δ Mario busts some of the funkiest moves he's ever attempted.


It's the classic Konami dancing game with Mario-based tunes and a selection of minigames, all played by stomping on a dance mat. We had a quick jiggle with it, and found it to be a bit easier than normal DDR titles, but still beyond the ability of our rhythmically challenged feet. The minigames, were also good, energetic fun.



MARIO TENNIS ADVANCE

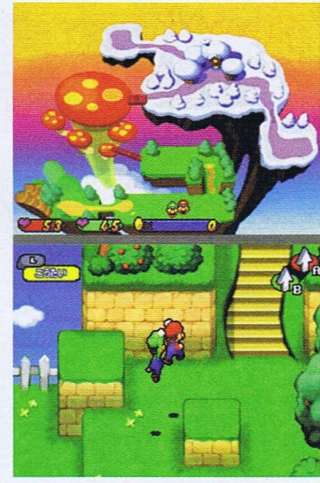
GBA power tennis is ready to go.


Δ The special move effects aren't as hot as on Gamecube, of course.


Judging by the brief E3 demo, this plays almost exactly the same as the Gamecube version. We played with Mario, Peach, DK and Waluigi, and saw the same power shots, albeit without such a long animation to watch beforehand. The RPG mode wasn't playable at the show, but we'd be surprised if it wasn't much the same as the GBA *Mario Golf* and the excellent GBC *Mario Tennis*. All good, really.




Δ Babies on the upper screen while the big guys solve puzzles below.

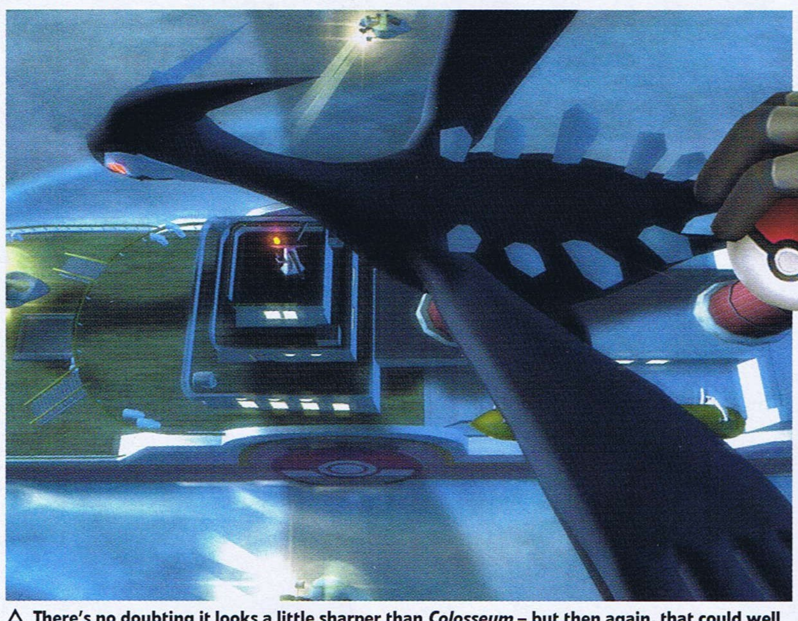

Δ Sometimes there's a handy map on the upper screen.

MARIO & LUIGI 2

Role-playing on Nintendo DS.


The brilliant RPG returns on DS, with the twin screens used in a variety of interesting ways. As well as the usual map screens, you may have multiple views of a scene. Or you could use one character to throw another into the upper screen, or face off against a boss standing two screens tall. Baby versions of Mario and Luigi crop up too, so you'll sometimes have four characters to control at once.



△ There's no doubting it looks a little sharper than *Colosseum* – but then again, that could well be due to the fact that the demo pods were all running through some expensive monitors.

△ This is the place where the demo kicked off. Exciting, no?

POKÉMON XD
GALE OF DARKNESS

Is this the Pokémon RPG we've all been hoping for?



Back at the Games Developers Conference in March, Reggie Fils-Aime said that *Pokémon XD* is a brand new Pokémon game for Gamecube. Apparently it's a true Pokémon RPG (like its handheld cousins) as opposed to a sequel to the somewhat simplistic *Pokémon Colosseum*. Just what the doctor ordered, then. Just what we've all been crying out for ever since the Gamecube launched a few years back. So why aren't we excited?

WHEN WE PLAYED IT...

The E3 demo was hugely disappointing. After queuing up for over an hour, all we got was something depressingly similar to *Colosseum*. The demo allowed you to walk around the interior and exterior of a temple-like building where you engaged in two battles. While this wasn't bad as such, it didn't give a clear indication of the way the RPG was structured. As a result, the demo threw up far more questions than answers.

The most disappointing thing was the fact that three of the demo's main features were straight out of *Colosseum*. Firstly, Shadow Pokémon have returned, so too has the Snatch Machine and last of all, the Aura Searcher, which lets you scan for Shadow Pokémon – the same purpose as your female companion in *Colosseum*.





△ Looks awfully familiar, doesn't it?

NGC VERDICT

We hoped that Nintendo might really start this game from scratch and deliver a whole new Pokémon game – something special and unique. This isn't the case. It borrows very heavily from *Colosseum* in the way the environments look and the style of the artwork throughout. The textures are bland, the character animation is just as wooden and the battle scenes all feel disappointingly familiar.

Apparently the XD in the title stands for Extra Dimension – if there *is* an extra dimension, we've yet to see it. On the strength of its E3 showing, Pokémon XD has a long way to go if it's to deliver the kind of experience we've all been waiting for.







Δ *Geist*'s framerate, while inconsistent, isn't that bad.



Δ The game has a distinctly spooky, X-Files style vibe about it.



Δ You need to scare and then enter a host body in order to stay alive. You can also replenish your ghostly energy by sucking the life out of plants if need be.

GEIST

Nintendo's full spectral warrior performs in fits and starts.



Δ There's some nice lighting, but the texturing is dull in places.

People have been moaning about *Geist* and saying that it's a real disappointment, but we liked it. There *are* some framerate issues here, but they're not as constant as some would have you believe. The visuals are a bit rough around the edges, and some of the textures look a little N64 in places. During one cutscene, for example, there was some wooden facial animation and dull scenery textures. It was a bit reminiscent of *Turok 3* in places – which isn't good.

Despite these niggles, there's something about it that makes it feel special. The spooky ambience sucks you in, and there are some nice touches that we really like. At one point, the character you're controlling dies and you find yourself floating around in a garden-like heaven where you're taught the art of possession. When you've mastered the basics, the heaven starts disintegrating, with its wire-frame construction flickering in and out of view, while the voice of the in-game tutor goes all vocoded in a Cher-stylee. Frightening.

The main hook of the game is the possession system. While you're a ghost, your energy bar diminishes, so you're forced to enter a host (which you can control) or an inanimate object, which you can manipulate or activate to scare the NPCs. It works wonderfully and delivers an experience unlike any other FPS we can think of.



Δ Despite some technical issues and generic enemy design, the overall atmosphere and unique elements certainly help.

NGC VERDICT



While *Geist* is hardly the best FPS we've ever played, it still has a great deal going for it. The concepts behind the game manage to turn it into a better game than it might otherwise be. On the face of it, it's just a pretty average shooter with some inconsistent presentation. Some of the environments are very nice in terms of architecture and lighting, but bog-standard in the way they're textured. But the story – which looks to be very strong from our admittedly limited play-time – and the new ideas that it brings to the table will prove to be its redeeming features rather than its quality as an out-and-out FPS experience.



Δ The time of day often dictates the people that you can interact with.

CHIBI ROBO

A hidden gem that will put a smile on your face.



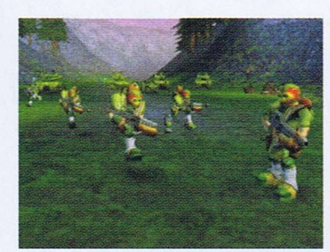
Not the most technically impressive game at E3, but easily one of the most memorable. Chibi (a little house-cleaning robot) runs around a living room, collecting rubbish and cleaning sludge off the floor. Some of which is easily accessible, while others are in harder to reach places. He runs on electricity that slowly runs down, and once that has gone it's game over.

Thankfully, Chibi can access sockets to recharge. So part of the strategy is in figuring out the best route before Chibi runs out of juice. There are also all manner of other elements to consider, like the cycle of night and day. It's not too detailed, but the chunky environments, garish colours and bizarre voices ('SKIMINEEE-WIKI-WAH- GLIBIDDY-WEE!) of the characters had us chuckling. Any game that sounds like a helium-fuelled Scatman John has got to be worth looking into, surely?



Δ Chibi is running low on energy – find a plug socket pronto...


NINTENDO DS
practise me
12 13 14 11 1 Start here 2 10 3 go! 4 9 5 8 7 6
Draw me!
Circa 1907
Picasso me!
practise me
practise me
practise me
Looks silly but still works
Ha Ha your mullet's on fire
Turbo me!
Give in to me!
Art for people who like eating ghosts
OUT NOW
PAC-PIX
namco
Do it yourself! Use the DS stylus to draw your very own Pac-Man and see him come to life. Once you've finished, he will move around the screen, eating those pesky ghosts. Let the games begin!
WWW.NINTENDO.CO.UK
TOUCH ME!
3+
www.pegi.info
PAC-PIX™ & © 1980 2004 NAMCO LTD., ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. TM, ® AND THE NINTENDO DS LOGO ARE TRADEMARKS OF NINTENDO. © 2005 NINTENDO.



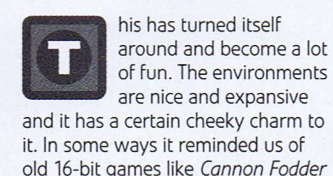
Any troops in your battalion can be commanded at any time.

BATTALION WARS

Advance Wars gets a new name.



There are plenty of vehicles to commandeer, from airborne units to tanks and Jeeps. Each proves satisfying to use and has its own distinct advantage.



This has turned itself around and become a lot of fun. The environments are nice and expansive and it has a certain cheeky charm to it. In some ways it reminded us of old 16-bit games like *Cannon Fodder* and *General Chaos.*

WHAT WE PLAYED...

There were three playable missions available on the E3 demo, and each one was basically a 'follow-the-radar-to-your-objective' affair. Whether it was to destroy a spy outpost, freeing a bunch of your men from a compound, capturing an installation or just blowing the hell out of everything. You can pick up an assortment of vehicles along the way, like tanks and buggies, all of which felt satisfyingly chunky to drive. You can switch to any of your men at any given time and can order them around with simple commands like 'Attack', 'Stay' and 'Follow' with the touch of a button.

Pleasingly, despite being primarily action orientated, you can't just steam in and shoot everything, because health is depleted pretty quickly, so considered tactics like taking high ground or cover are necessary for success. The only criticisms so far are that the controls felt a little stodgy in places and big explosions caused some nasty slowdown.

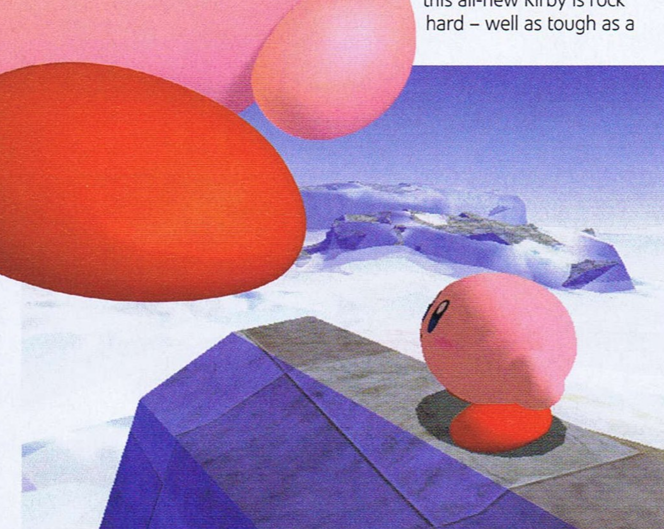
KIRBY ADVENTURES

The pink blob returns to Gamecube

A 2D platformer dressed up in 3D, this is Kirby's first adventure on Gamecube. As in *Kirby: Canvas Curse*, the pink blob can take on the powers of his enemies and fights with swords and hammers. See, this all-new Kirby is rock hard – well as tough as a gay pink ball can be – and with the new attack system, he can ride on top of three helpers to beef up his powers. Finally, as well as the single-player adventure, there will be a four-player multiplayer mode. We haven't got any details on this, but Nintendo tell us it will be 'wild'.

WHAT WE SAW...

Kirby wasn't playable at E3, but we saw a video of little pinkie moving through levels, decking enemies. First – with a Link-style hat on – we saw him slashing enemies with his sword, before moving on to a beach where he took on a watery form and seemed to shoot liquid at baddies from his arse.



This is the new 'tough' Kirby. He's hardly Robocop, is he?



The more people Kirby rides, the more powerful the attack will be.

It's from the guy who made *Seaman* on Dreamcast. 'Nuff said.

ODAMA

Pinball meets RTS. Yes, it's freaking us out, too.



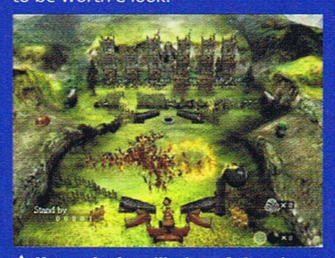
Only a month ago, it was rumoured that Nintendo had canned the military pinballer, *Odama*. Well, we're glad that this was a load of crap because *Odama* is one of the strangest games we've ever seen.

Looking at the screenshots it appears to be a pinball game with fancy feudal Japanese backgrounds, but you do actually control the 30-man army on the screen as they help General Kagetora destroy Kandare's huge evil army. It's a pinball game with a story.

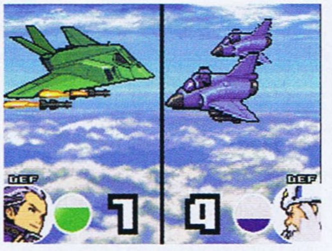
But it's the control scheme that's the really odd thing. The last time we saw *Odama*, we had to use the controller to tell the little soldiers what to do, but now you bark orders into Nintendo's microphone. So you can shout 'Charge' and 'More Men'.

The 'Odama' is the pinball bit. Or, to use the technical term, the paddles. You control this with the pad while yelling at your team on the field. So, in the level we played, our team needed to get to the end of the battlefield, but the path was blocked by a gate, so we had to smash through with one of the seven Odama balls.

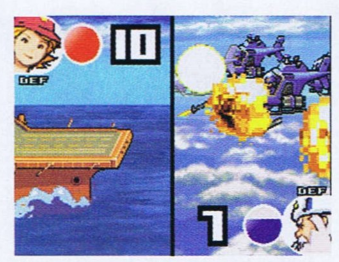
Okay, graphically *Odama* doesn't look particularly amazing and probably won't be an essential purchase, but with its mix of shouting and pinball, it's going to be worth a look.



Know the humiliation of shouting 'More Men' in a crowded room...



△ We can't wait to have WiFi wars with up to eight players…



△ The cheeky animations are back, but you can turn them off if you want.

ADVANCE WARS DUAL STRIKE

Double the screens – double the tactics. Need we say more?

The prospect of dual-screen, eight-player WiFi battles has got us rather excited. More so when you consider that, in addition to the turn-based combat, there's a new combat mode which has you fighting real-time conflicts against either a mate or the computer. There's also the ability to use the new COs together, combining them for powerful attacks.

You can still only move one unit at a time, but unlike before, your opponent can start lobbing missiles at your little guys from the off.

WHAT WE PLAYED…

We only played the first few battles and, as you would expect, they weren't particularly taxing. But we definitely enjoyed the new dual-screen battling feature as, potentially, this could make for much more interesting skirmishes and battles – forcing you to think about two strategies at once.



△ Nope, Nintendo haven't really done much to spruce the game up visually, but so what?

True, *Advance Wars DS* looks pretty similar to the old GBA games. Apart from the new, spruced up 3D backgrounds, not much has been done to sex it up visually, but this doesn't really matter – the perfectly balanced strategy game at its core not only remains intact, but has been enhanced by the dual-screen features. As if that weren't enough, there's a map editor tucked away, that allows you to create maps with your stylus and send them to friends.



△ The stylus allows for a depth of customisation and an ease of control not possible before. It feels like DS is its natural home.

ANIMAL CROSSING DS

The virtual world takes on a new online, handheld dimension.

This is one of those games that feels as though it was always meant to be played on the DS. It's more at home here than it ever was on N64 or Gamecube. Everything from the controls to the customisation to the new features – like WiFi compatibility – make this a mouth-watering prospect indeed.

WHAT WE PLAYED…

There was basically, one town for us to walk around, and there wasn't very much to it. However, it was enough to convince us that this could well be the best thing to come to DS. Visually, things have changed significantly, with a 3D scrolling environment on the bottom screen and the sky on the top screen. The stylus really enhances the game. Just hold the stylus on the screen and your avatar will follow. Tap doors and inhabitants to interact with them, use it to type letters or notices and you can even customise your character, using it to draw patterns on clothes and so forth.

To make it truly global, it will also be identical across all three territories. Gone are the potentially alienating 'real-world' holidays such as Christmas and Easter Sunday, and in their place will be holidays that are specific to the *Animal Crossing* universe, to ensure compatibility around the world.



△ You can only enter the towns of friends you've met in the real world…



△ …So there's no chance of abusing the online system.

GUNSTAR SUPER HEROES

There's life in that GBA yet.




△ We're more excited than a bag of happy puppies about this one.



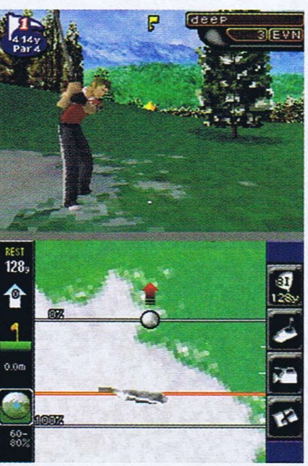
△ Levels like this are new for the GBA. Did we say how excited we are?

This was the first game we checked out on Sega's stand, which shows just how excited by it we are. We weren't disappointed. The game was chucking sprites around and rotating and scaling them as though its life depended on it.

Fans of the original will feel at home here, from the choice between static and free Red and Blue characters to the basic three-weapon set that can be combined together. Old physical moves also return, from the slide attack to the potent flying kick.

Pleasingly, the game is just as relentless as its predecessor, with hundreds of enemies, plenty of bosses and mini-bosses to dispatch, as well as more unusual levels – one of which had you flying spinning around on an aircraft defeating airborne enemies.

Seriously, this one can't come soon enough.





△ We know, it doesn't look great, but trust us, it actually plays pretty well.

TOUCH GOLF

The alternative sticksie-ball sim.



We thought we'd give you guys the heads up on this one – it's shaping up to be pretty good and, in light of the control problems on *Tiger Woods*, looks set to be the best golf game on the DS.

Its biggest asset is the way it handles the all important swing-mechanic. Here you have to pull your club back with the stylus before flicking it forward through the ball to hit it. It's a system which seems far better than *Woods'*, at least insofar as you get a better feel for things.

The only downside is that it isn't a pretty game. Especially when you consider that the DS is capable of so much more. Hopefully, this side of things will improve with time.



△ *Metroid Pinball* proved unspectacular, but still enjoyable.



△ Fortunately, the physics were decent enough to not cause problems.

METROID PINBALL

Samus gets knocked up...



Unlike *Mario Pinball*, which turned out to be utter rubbish, *Metroid Pinball*'s somewhat short E3 demo proved to be pretty competent and enjoyable. The physics seemed fine insofar as they weren't actually offensive, and the ball's transition between top and bottom screen was absolutely seamless.

There was only one table available to play on, (that we saw anyway) complete with the mandatory score-boosting ramps and bonuses like Bug Hunt, which spawns hundreds of little aliens for an unmorphed Samus to shoot at, and Metroid Mania, which sends loads of little Metroids your way, all intent of sucking all your energy away.

The only other extra table we came across was as a result of rolling into a wormhole where Samus, on hitting a missile container a few times to retrieve it, sparked a boss battle against an Omega Pirate. Again, nothing particularly earth shattering or spectacular, but enjoyable nonetheless.

TRAUMA CENTER

It's time to put your surgeon's skills under the knife...



△ You're graded on your accuracy and speed at the end of the surgery.



△ The different surgeries start easy and get harder as the game goes on.



Tucked away on a solitary demo pod was probably one of the most original games we've ever seen in our long and distinguished (yeah, right) careers. You take on the role of a surgeon who has to operate on different people for a plethora of different ailments.

The top screen shows your nurse for the operation that gives you detailed instructions on what to do, while the touch-screen takes care of the action itself.

Here you'll find a graphical representation of a wound or other medical emergency (a tumour on a heart, for example) as well as icons for surgical instruments, like swabs, scalpels and hypodermic needles.

Each item has a specific use, like adrenalin, which needs to be administered if you're losing your patient – yes we've seen Pulp Fiction too – scalpels for making incisions, tweezers for pulling foreign objects out of the body and suture for stitching up wounds.

Every operation you perform increases in complexity, and at the end of each surgery, you're graded on speed and accuracy. Maybe it was just us, but we thought that this was absolutely brilliant.

METROID PRIME HUNTERS

There's still no word on the important single-player mode…

We hoped we'd see at least *something* on *Hunters*' single-player campaign, but once again we were limited to the multiplayer. A slight disappointment, but nothing that wasn't quickly dispelled.

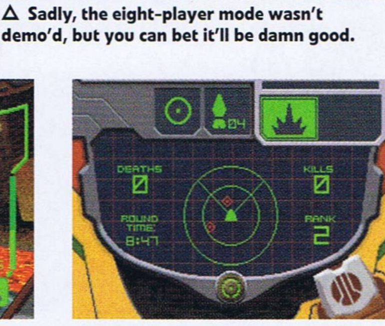
Things seemed significantly more polished here than in the demo. Maybe it's the fact that everything's much clearer and much brighter in terms of the environments, particularly in the desert-like arena which is pretty reminiscent of *Prime*'s Chozo ruins.

New to the demo were a handful of game modes, from the usual deathmatch scenario to a King-of-the-Hill-type mode. There were also three new character types boasting different variations on Samus' morphball – Noxus for example could turn into a bug to get through tight spaces, while Spire's equivalent could roll up vertical surfaces, Spiderball style. Unfortunately the game's eight-player functionality wasn't shown, with skirmishes limited to four-player affairs which, in the larger arenas, often left you wondering where the hell the other players were. Hopefully we'll have our own playable code to comment on fairly soon.

△ Sadly, the eight-player mode wasn't demo'd, but you can bet it'll be damn good.



△ Multiplayer battles over WiFi are going to be really, *really* fun.



△ The bottom screen displays all the multiplayer stats. Which is handy.



△ It's all straight-forward downhill racing, but at least it does it well.

SNOWBOARD KIDS

N64 classic gets a DS overhaul.


Not exactly brimming with DS-specific functionality, but enjoyable all the same. As you'd expect, it's a simple racing affair where you hurtle downhill against three other racers. There was only the one track available at E3, but it was enough to showcase a pretty decent 3D engine and tight handling. Best thought of as *Mario Kart* with snow, we suppose. The game gives you power-ups – like the ability to freeze other racers – to get the advantage over your opponent, while pulling tricks fills up a meter that gives you extra speed. So far so good then, although we miss the super-deformed characters from the N64 game, which have now been replaced by slightly more serious anime-style character art.

LOST IN BLUE

At long last, some hands-on time with 'Stranded Kids DS'…


△ This bit was genius: blow into the microphone to start the fire.



△ There are two characters, a boy and a girl. You play the boy.


Despite some visual problems like fogging and shabby textures, this is still promising to be a great little adventure.

Just as in the Game Boy original, you're stranded on an island with one task – to survive. The demo was pretty short, but showed some brilliant mini-games. To start with, you have to light a fire to dry your clothes, to do this you have to find a cave, some bark and a stick to help light a fire. Once you have them, you have to tap the L and R buttons to twizzle the stick for friction, before blowing into your DS to get the air flowing. Genius. Other games involved milking a goat and adding ingredients to a pot before simmering your stew by closing the DS's lid. Again – genius.

The demo also introduced the dual character system. Here you come across a stranded girl and you have to guide the poor lass back to your cave. In order for the two of you to survive, you have to fulfil criteria like hunger, strength and thirst by collecting food and water like thirst-quenching coconuts. Another **NGC** show favourite.

"Play as Venom for one long mission"





△ Spider-Man in all his cel-shaded glory. We want it, and we want it now.

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

Spider-Man is a swinger, and we play for both sides.

The first shock is the graphics – it's like seeing the wall-crawler swinging through *XIII*. But once you got beyond the strange experience of seeing a comic-book hero rendered in such a precise cel-shaded style, *Ultimate Spider-Man* produces a jolt greater than mere visuals. Because this story-driven conversion of the Marvel comic allows you to play for both sides, to fight for good and evil, to save lives as the young Peter Parker and to crush innocents as the sinister Venom.

WHAT WE PLAYED...

We were lucky enough to get to play as Venom for one long mission, while the big lump battled Electro and protected a downed Spider-Man. Lobbing cars is just one of his many moves in a combat system that feels similar to the movie versions of the games. Leaping from roof to roof instead of swinging, we were also able to smash up parts of the city and drain energy from pedestrians by hauling them into his suit.



△ You don't have to play as Spider-Man, you know.





△ This was already looking great, but Sega haven't been complacent.

SPARTAN TOTAL WARRIOR

Greeks smash more than just plates.



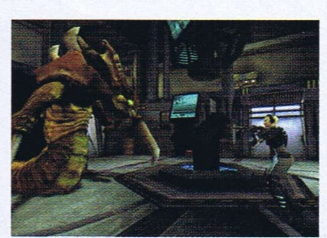
With three brand new arenas on show, *Spartan* somehow managed to look even more spectacular than when we last saw it. The Roman Colosseum and even the dank caves of Troy have all been brushed up with enhanced textures and lighting effects that radiate from your glowing torch. New enemies have also been revealed, along with some of the differing tactics needed to take them out. After all, you can't defeat skeletons with bows and arrows; you need to break their bones with a maul or blade. Which sounds simple enough, except on one of the new levels you only have feeble farmers as your army and have to defend the entire town against the barbarian hordes.



STARCRAFT GHOST

The Ghost finally gets in the machine.





△ Blizzard shocked everyone with the inclusion of a new multiplayer mode.

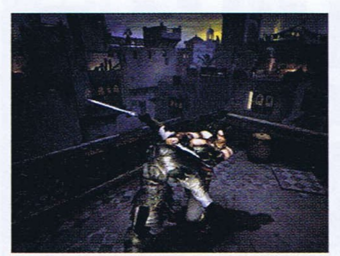


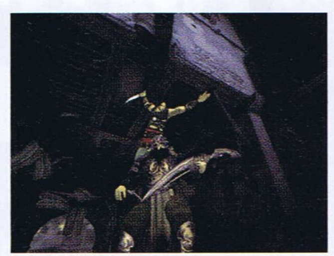
After drifting through development hell for what seems like an eternity – and still not set to surface again until early next year – *Starcraft: Ghost* finally appeared at E3 in a three-level demo. But time hasn't stood still for Blizzard, as the show floor surprise was a previously hidden multiplayer mode and a whole host of extra vehicles.

So in between helping Nova choke enemies with a combo-driven attack, we also saw her nick a Vulture bike and join up with two other classes of soldier for what looks like becoming a solid stand-alone team battle option – that is once the framerate is fixed.

What is more, the stealth/action gameplay has been kept deliberately open, allowing you to complete the missions in whatever manner you choose – be it stealthy or violent – without channelling or forcing you down a set path.


△ Prince of Persia has had some stealth action thrown into the mix.


△ Can you see that in the distance? Yes! That's right it's sunlight! Hurrah!


△ The game has been made a lot more free-roaming than it was before.

PRINCE OF PERSIA KINDRED BLADES

Babylon's burning but look who is about PoP up again…


△ When your victims don't see you coming, you can kill them in one hit.

They've listened! They had to – the howls of derision that greeted *Warrior Within* are still echoing around Ubisoft. So the pleasing thing about *Kindred Blades* is that you can see the daylight, you can go outdoors, you can enjoy the music without having to be a sulking goth who won't tidy their room because their busy being 'individual'. The tone is positioned between the first two games, and in plot terms, placed at the end of the trilogy. It also introduces a playable alter ego called the Dark Prince who shares the story with our hero, but does the bulk of the killing. And it's his new, stealthy style that adds variety to the constant and slightly repetitive killings of *Warrior,* while the roof-top leaping and huge draw range also showed that *Kindred Blades* will be more balletic and beautiful than ever.

WHAT WE SAW…
With the Montreal team admitting that they haven't started work on the cosmetic aspects of the game yet, series designer Yannis Mallet kept his hands on the pad throughout the demo. But he was happy to show both the characters romping through the city, even climbing up to the rooftops to show how the new open locations allow you to move about with more freedom. He also revealed how the hero's gloomy doppelgänger is also able to perform a stealth move that allows him to score a one hit kill on an enemy who doesn't spot his new, silent walk.

VIEWTIFUL JOE DS/VFX BATTLE

Join the Viewtiful people.

Instead of any laurel/bottom-resting interaction, Capcom are once again trying to push the whole weird world of Viewtiful Joe forward with a glimpse of a Gamecube version called *Viewtiful Joe VFX Battle,* where the cast battle it out to appear in the next Captain Blue film. Meanwhile, *Scratch Viewtiful Joe* on the DS offers probably most inventive and intelligent use of the dual-screen and stylus that anyone has dreamt up so far. It also pushes back a few technical boundaries with its incredibly smooth, very slick and perfectly cel-shaded graphics. This one is almost definitely going to be a ratings winner.

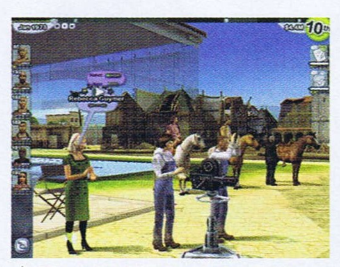
WHAT WE PLAYED…
In a lengthy and insane demo, *Scratch Viewtiful Joe* revealed how you can use the stylus to slice the screen in two. Making these cuts in the screen will allow Joe to put out a fire by shunting a fire hydrant from another part of the world over the flames. *VFX Battle* sadly only appeared in video form and concentrated on dust-ups between our heroes in a solo, co-op or four-player option.

△ *VFX Battle* sees the cast of characters battling it out to appear in the new Captain Blue film.

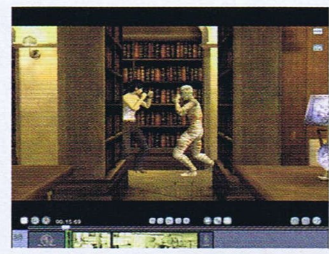
△ It appears that the innovation in the VJ series isn't slowing down.

△ *VFX Battle* features both two-player co-op and versus modes.

△ *VFX Battle* apparently boasts new, interactive scenery.



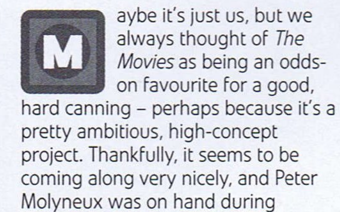
You can zoom in and out of the action at will. Technology, eh?



The movie-making suite is as versatile or as simple as you want.

THE MOVIES

Peter Molyneux's ambitious project is finally starting to make the cut…



Maybe it's just us, but we always thought of *The Movies* as being an odds-on favourite for a good, hard canning – perhaps because it's a pretty ambitious, high-concept project. Thankfully, it seems to be coming along very nicely, and Peter Molyneux was on hand during Activision's Pre-E3 conference to demonstrate just *how* nicely…

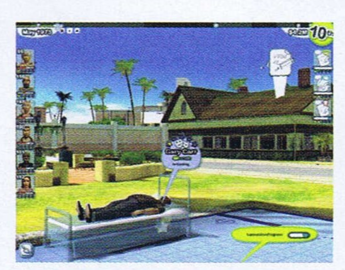
WHAT WE PLAYED…

Starting in the golden age of Hollywood, you manage the logistics of building up a studio: hiring and firing actors, building sets and facilities, writing scripts and so on and so forth. The actual process of doing this has been made very accessible, doing away with the tedious menu system normally associated with games like this and instead employing a simple, drag and drop system.

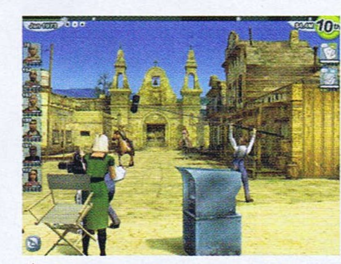
The most impressive thing about it, though, is the sheer depth you can go into in making your movies. You can create costumes, specify animations and actor paths, and even record your own voice for your film's dialogue. Although there's still no word on a release date…



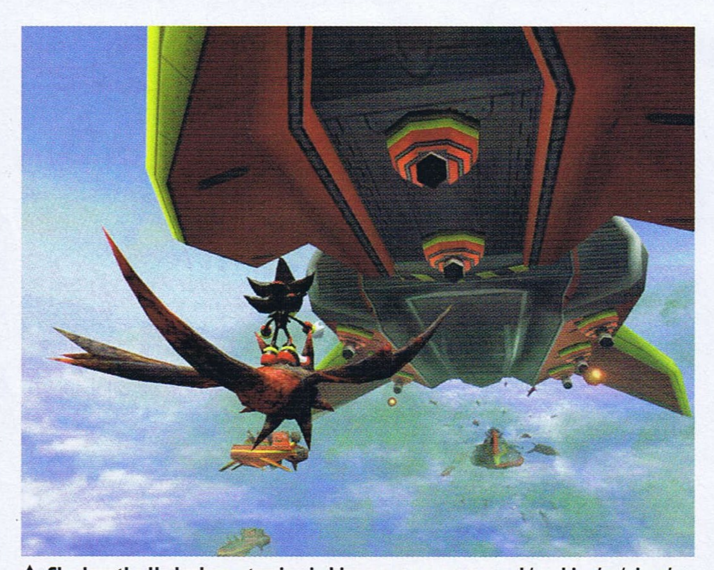
Before you can start a film, you have to get some writers cracking on a script. Just drag and drop the little people to their desks to get them started. Simple.



Icons and bars determine the happiness of your employees.



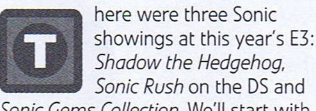
As your studio grows, you'll be able to make different kinds of film.



Shadow the Hedgehog, starring in his very own game, and 'packing' a 'piece'. Surely a recipe for a thoroughly rubbish game if ever we saw one.

SONICS

So many Sonics, so little time…



There were three Sonic showings at this year's E3: *Shadow the Hedgehog*, *Sonic Rush* on the DS and *Sonic Gems Collection*. We'll start with the most disappointing first, shall we?

Shadow, then… Yes, we know he's got a gun and can ride in vehicles, yes, the levels are more objective based, and yes, there are some nice super-moves, but *by Christ*, didn't it all smell of *Sonic Adventure 2 Battle*? This has a long way to go before we'd consider giving it the time of day.

The other Sonic games are much more appealing. First off, *Rush* on the DS gave us just what we want – a new 2D Sonic that sees him hurtling around 2D levels that take up both screens (run up a vertical surface and Sonic climbs to the top screen, for example). We didn't see anything groundbreaking, but it was fast, fluid and reasonably attractive.

But *Sonic Gems Collection* is where it's really at, with the Mega CD only *Sonic CD* (arguably the best Sonic ever made) worth the price of entry alone. The collection also has *Sonic R* (an as yet unreleased Sonic racer) and the curiously amusing *Sonic the Fighters* – a *Virtua Fighter Kids*-style beat-'em-up. If there's any justice in the world, you'll all be waiting for that *Sonic CD* with bated breath…



Sonic CD is probably the best of all the 2D Sonics. Or so our brains tell us.



Now you can beat Sonic to a pulp – *Virtua Fighter* style. We're sold.





You can pick up spears off the ground and fling them at any attacking foes.

KING KONG

The only thing better than a monkey is a big angry monkey…

The surprise of the show? Maybe. We entered Ubisoft's Kong theatre expecting a stinking pile of monkey dung, but we came away with a strange feeling of excitement, you know, 'down below'.

The reason? Well, it was all surprisingly accomplished. There were a series of gameplay demos in the first-person view, where huge lumbering beasts – or rather Tyrannosaurs – threatened to chomp you in two while you strafed around, desparately trying to wound them by throwing spears.

The set-pieces that we were shown all employed excessive use of shakey-cam to help instill the fear and confusion of battling ludicrously sized enemies, while scenes like escaping from dinosaurs down white-water rapids got us so excited we actually dribbled Diet Coke down our shirts. And the piece de resistance was the opportunity to control a screen-filling Kong through the jungle before wrestling another of those giant lizards.

Coming from the man behind the excellent *Beyond Good and Evil* (Michel Ancel), you can't blame us for feeling just a little bit excited by it. And if you don't feel the same way, hopefully those screenshots right under your very eyes will help convince you that our new-found anticipation might well be justified.



The enemies are absolutely huge with plenty of lovely detail.



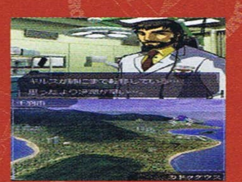
Just imagine what Turok could have turned out like in the right hands…

"THAT'S NOT ALL FOLKS…"

Did we miss anything? Every title shown on a Nintendo platform…







GAMECUBE

187 Ride or Die
SSX On Tour
Snowboard Kids
Castlevania
Trauma Centre
X-Men Legends 2
Namco Museum 50th Anniversary Arcade Collection
Hello Kitty Roller Rescue
The Incredibles: Rise of the Underhammer (DS, GBA)
Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects
Madden NFL '06
Madagascar
Digimon World 4
Disney's Chicken Little (DS, GBA)
Zatch Bell (DS, GBA)
The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe (DS, GBA)
Tak: The Great Ju Ju Challenge (DS, GBA)
James Bond 007: From Russia With Love
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (DS, GBA)
Medal of Honor: European Assault
Frogger: Helmet Havoc (DS, GBA)
The Sims 2 (DS, GBA)
Teen Titans
Batman Begins
Ed, Edd & Eddy: The Mis-Edventures
Midway Arcade Treasures
NCAAA Football '06
Mega Man X Collection
Nascar '06
Capcom Classics Collection
One Piece Grand Battle
SpongeBob SquarePants: Lights, Camera, Pants! (DS, GBA)
Scooby Doo Unmasked (DS, GBA)
Fantastic Four (DS, GBA)
Barnyard
Karaoke Revolution Party
Frogger: Ancient Shadow (DS, GBA)
Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction
Shrek Superslam
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger 3
Need For Speed: Most Wanted (DS)
X-Men Legends 2: Rise of the Apocalypse
WWE Day of Reckoning 2
Harvest Moon: Another Wonderful Life
Donkey Konga 2
Crash Tag Team Racing (DS)

DS

Bust-A-Move DS
SBK: Snowboard Kids DS
Trace Memory
Electroplankton
Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrrow
Nintendogs
Disney's Kim Possible (GBA)
Disney's Liz McGuire & That's so Raven (GBA)
Meteos
Gentle Brain Exercises
Shogun Empires
Pac 'N' Roll (GBA)
Table Hockey
Submarine
Polarium
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney
Golden Nugget Casino DS
Guilty Gear Dust Strikers
Age of Empires
ATV Quad Fury
A Boy and his Blob
Mega Man Battle Network 5
Texas Hold 'Em Poker
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 3 (GBA)
SpongeBob SquarePants: The Yellow Avenger
Lost in Blue
Dragon Booster
Spyro Shadow Legacy
Digitylish
Top Spin 2
Kirby: Canvas Curse
Trauma Centre: Under the Knife
GoldenEye: Rogue Agent
Dynasty Warriors
Zoo Tycoon
Street Racing Syndicate
Snood 2 (GBA)
Nicktoons
Ford Racing 3
Fairly Odd Parents
Big Mutha Truckers (GBA)

GBA

Yoshi! Topsy Turvy
Gunstar Super Heroes
Disney's The Proud Family
Disney's Herbie
Disney's Cinderella
Fuzz & Rocket
Sigma Star Saga
Rebelstar Tactical Command
Gumby Vs The Astrobots
Berenstain Bears and the Spooky Old Tree
Atomic Betty
Mega Man Zero 4
Mega Man Battle Network 5: TP
Mega Man Battle Network 5: TC
One Piece
The Winx Club
Dynasty Warriors Advance
DK: King of Swing
Wario Ware Twisted!
Pokémon Emerald
The Nightmare Before Christmas
World Poker Tour 2K6
Scurge: Hive
Juka and the Monophonic Menace
Metal Slug 1
Trouble/Connect Four/Perfection
Spy Hunter/Super Sprint
Riviera: The Promised Land
Risk/Battleship/Cluedo
Power Rangers 2005
Paperboy/Rampage
Millipede/Super Breakout/ Lunar Lander
Klax/Marble Madness
Hugo Bukkazoom
Harvest Moon: More Friends of Mineral Town
Gauntlet/Rampart
Ford Racing 3
Danny Phantom
Chicken Shoot 2
Chicken Shoot
Chess/Checkers/Backgammon
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
Breakout/Centipede/Warlords
Bratz
Asteroids/Pong/Yar's Revenge
Aggravation/Sorry/Scrabble Jr.

ULTRA RELEASE LIST

The latest on every Nintendo system game in development – updated monthly!

UK RELEASES

The most accurate listing available – but slippages can occur. We're not psychic, goddamit. All titles Gamecube unless otherwise stated.

JUNE

13	Touch! Kirby (DS)	Nintendo
14	Dragon Ball GT Transformation (GBA)	Atari
17	Dragon Ball Advanced Adventure (GBA)	Atari
17	Medal of Honor: European Assault	EA
21	Megaman Battle Network 5 (GBA)	Capcom
24	Another Code (DS)	Nintendo
24	Batman Begins	EA
24	Batman Begins (GBA)	EA
24	Mario Party Advance (GBA)	Nintendo
24	Madagascar	Activision
24	Madagascar (GBA)	Activision
24	Madagascar (DS)	Activision
24	Meteos (DS)	Bandai
24	Sigma Star Saga (GBA)	Namco
28	Riviera: The Promised Land (GBA)	Atlus

JULY

1	Bomberman (DS)	Ubisoft
1	Killer 7	Capcom
1	GoldenEye: Rogue Agent (DS)	EA
1	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Chaos Theory (DS)	Ubisoft
3	Donkey Konga 2: Hit Song Parade	Nintendo
5	Kim Possible 3 (GBA)	Buena Vista
9	NGC out today!	
15	Fantastic Four	Activision
15	Fantastic Four (GBA)	Activision
15	Charlie and the Chocolate Factory	Take-Two
15	Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (GBA)	Take-Two
TBC	Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 4: Lockdown	Ubisoft
TBC	Nanostray (DS)	Buena Vista

AUGUST

TBC	Blades of Thunder 2 (DS)	Summitsoft
TBC	Gumby Vs the Astrobots (GBA)	Namco
TBC	Gundam Seed: Battle Assault (GBA)	Bandai
TBC	Hello Kitty Roller Rescue	Namco
TBC	Lost in Blue (DS)	Konami
TBC	Namco Museum 50th Anniversary	Namco
TBC	One Piece (GBA)	Bandai
TBC	Pac 'n' Roll (DS)	Namco
TBC	Rebelstar: Tactical Command (GBA)	Namco
TBC	Texas Hold 'Em (DS)	Majesco
TBC	The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction	Vivendi
TBC	Zatchbell	Bandai

SEPTEMBER

6	Cinderella: The Game (GBA)	Buena Vista
6	Lizzie McGuire 3 (GBA)	Buena Vista
6	That's So Raven 2 (GBA)	Buena Vista
6	Frogger (DS)	Konami
TBC	Scooby-Doo! Unmasked	THQ
TBC	Scooby-Doo! Unmasked (GBA)	THQ
TBC	Scooby-Doo! Unmasked (DS)	THQ
TBC	Spartan: Total Warrior	Sega
TBC	SR Monkey Team Hyperforce Go! (GBA)	Buena Vista
TBC	Ultimate Card Games (DS)	Telegames
TBC	Ultimate Pocket Games (GBA)	Telegames
TBC	W.I.T.C.H. (GBA)	Buena Vista

OCTOBER

Backyard Skateboarding (GBA)	Atari
Castlevania (DS)	Konami
Geist	Nintendo
Lunar Genesis (DS)	Ubisoft
Metroid Prime: Hunters (DS)	Nintendo
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney (DS)	Capcom
Odama	Nintendo
Shogun Warrior: The Lost Army	Namco
Tak 3 (DS)	THQ
Yu-Gi-Oh! Nightmare Troubadour (DS)	Konami
Zoo Tycoon (DS)	THQ

NOVEMBER

Animal Crossing (DS)	Nintendo
Atomic Betty (GBA)	Namco
Advance Wars (DS)	Nintendo
Crash Tag Team Racing	Vivendi
Crash Tag Team Racing (DS)	Vivendi
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire	EA
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (DS)	EA
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (GBA)	EA
Need For Speed: Most Wanted	EA
Need For Speed: Most Wanted (DS)	EA
Mario Kart (DS)	Nintendo
Midway Arcade Treasures 3	Midway
The Movies	Activision
Pac-Man World 3	Namco
Peter Jackson's King Kong	Ubisoft
Peter Jackson's King Kong (GBA)	Ubisoft
Peter Jackson's King Kong (DS)	Ubisoft
Prince of Persia: Warrior Within (DS)	Ubisoft
Prince of Persia 3 (GBA)	Ubisoft
Scratch! Viewtiful Joe (DS)	Capcom
Starcraft: Ghost	Vivendi
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe	Buena Vista
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (GBA)	Buena Vista
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (DS)	Buena Vista

TBC 2005

The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess	Nintendo
Fire Emblem	Nintendo

YOUR MOST WANTED

Which games are you most looking forward to? Scribble them on this form, cut it out, send it to us and you'll be entered in a prize draw to win a copy of *Pac-Pix*.

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

Name ....

Address ....

Postcode ....

Send your entries to Your Most Wanted, NGC magazine, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW

NGC MOST WANTED

The games we're dreaming about (and in some cases, playing)...



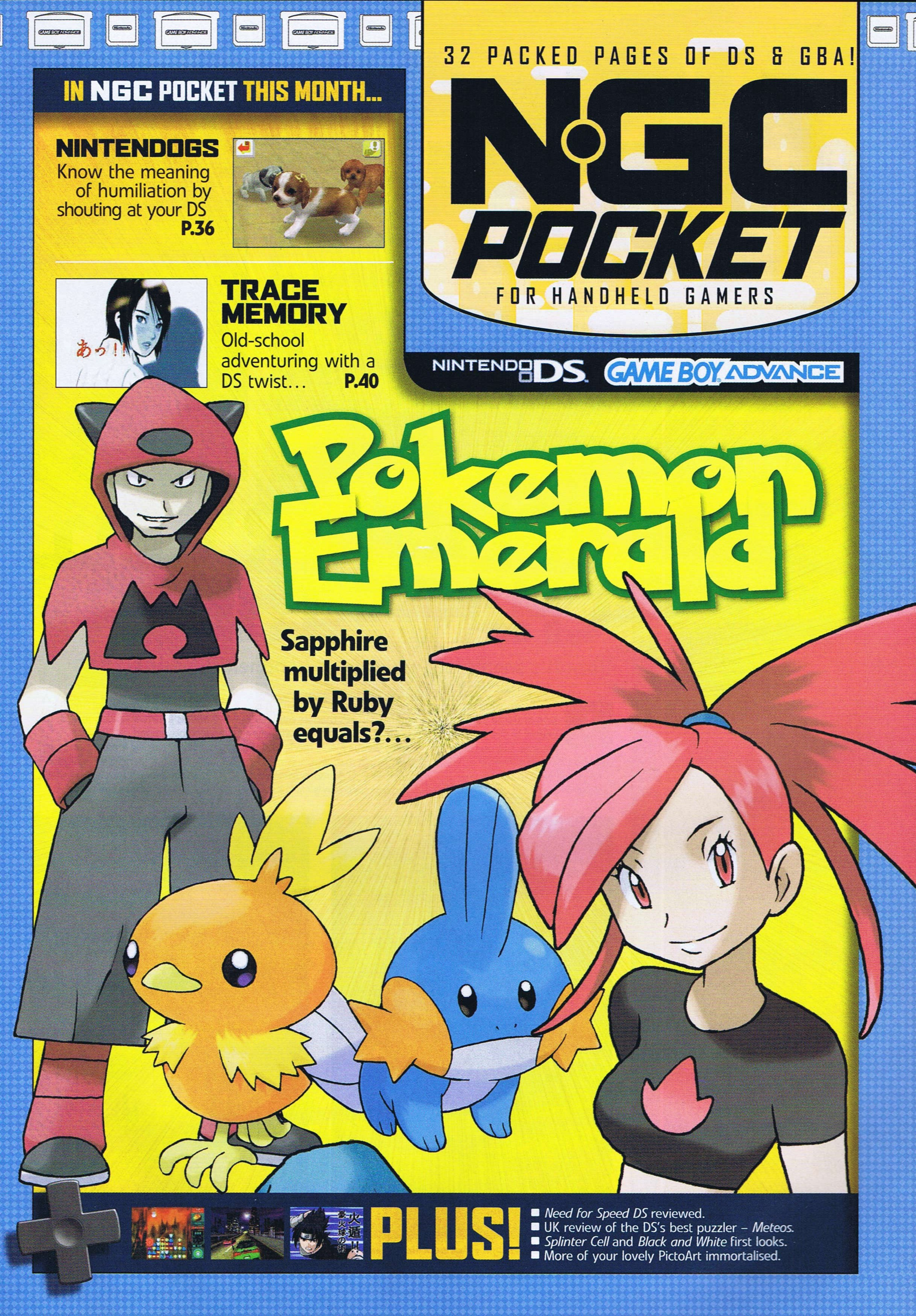
1 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA NINTENDO
This doesn't really need an introduction does it? It's the only game in living memory that has made grown men weep right before our very eyes. So it has to be good.
IN A NUTSHELL: It's like bigger, prettier *Ocarina of Time*.

2 NEW ENTRY GEIST NINTENDO
First person shooters are a rare breed on Gamecube, and after playing the E3 demo, it's safe to say that this will fill the void nicely. Even if the textures are rubbish.
IN A NUTSHELL: An FPS with an intriguing story and ghost-based jiggery-pokery.

3 NEW ENTRY MARIO KART NINTENDO
A DS version of everyone's favourite racer. We played it at E3 and the verdict is that it's near perfect. It's even got a whole cup dedicated to retro tracks from past games.
IN A NUTSHELL: Drive Mario and friends around in karts, shooting koopa shells.

4 FIRE EMBLEM: TRAIL OF THE FLAME NINTENDO
Yeah, okay, so we reviewed it this issue, but we don't speak Japanese so it's staying put. Honestly, this is the business.
IN A NUTSHELL: *Advance Wars* with fantasy and RPG trappings.

5 NEW ENTRY MARIO SOCCER NINTENDO
It's all a bit cynical just shoving Mario in another sports game, but at least you can thump Toads into electric fences, which pretty much does it for us.
IN A NUTSHELL: Mario plays 'soccer'. or rather 'football' to anyone with a brain.



32 PACKED PAGES OF DS & GBA!
NGC
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NINTENDOGS
Know the meaning of humiliation by shouting at your DS
P.36
TRACE MEMORY
Old-school adventuring with a DS twist...
P.40
あっ!!
NINTENDO DS
GAME BOY ADVANCE
Pokemon Emerald
Sapphire multiplied by Ruby equals?...
PLUS!
Need for Speed DS reviewed.
UK review of the DS's best puzzler – Meteos.
Splinter Cell and Black and White first looks.
More of your lovely PictoArt immortalised.



WELCOME TO NGC POCKET...

It's always the quiet ones isn't it? While gullible fools were busy drooling over fake, pre-rendered PS3 footage, or so-called 'Xbox360 games' running on Apple Mac G5s, Nintendo's booth kept things tidy and delivered, in our opinion, some of the most interesting and unique games available at the moment. Nintendo's DS presence was exceptional this year, with demos of all the big stuff – like the near-perfect *Mario Kart DS* – and some hidden gems like *Trauma Center* and *Lost in Blue*. You'll find more infomation on everything we saw at the show in our E3 coverage at the front of the mag.

And what about the (very, *very*) small matter of the GBA Micro? We can't say we weren't just a touch dissapointed when Reggie pulled it out of his pocket before announcing the third generation of the same old technology, but *damn*, if it isn't a sexy little machine. We don't want one, we don't need one, but then we know we're going to end up buying one. Which is exactly the kind of stupid behaviour Nintendo are counting on. Here's hoping that the launch price is as easy on the pocket as the unit itself, eh?

Which brings us to another third iteration of an old Nintendo product, namely *Pokémon Emerald*. Yes, it is pretty good, yes it is slightly (*cough*) expanded, but out of all of this month's reviews, the one that *really* made me sit up and take notice was the quite lovely *Trace Memory*...

Geraint Rhys-Evans, Handyman



NGC POCKET, NGC Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath. BA1 2BW
Issue 7, July 2005
Editor: The Welsh Wonder
Contributors: Hippy bum layabout boy, Red 'em up Kittsy, The Blue Flash, The Norfolk Turkey

SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY

Ubisoft's sneak-'em-up goes all handheld...

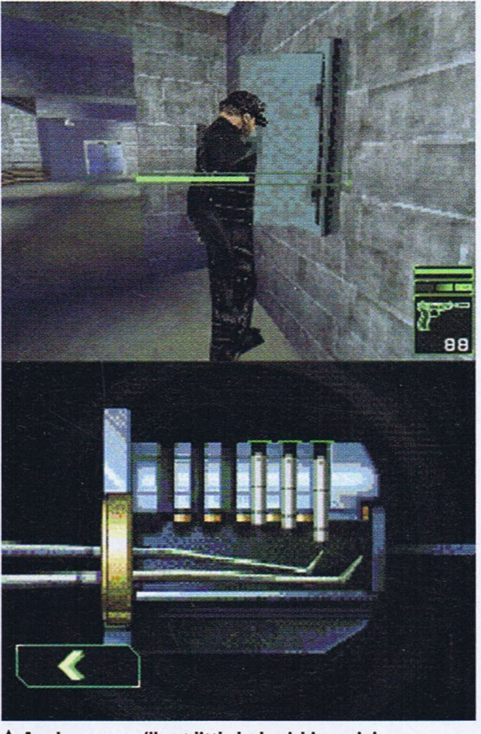
If you're looking for the kind of game you'd expect to see on a big console, but on the DS, *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory* could well be the exact thing you're looking for.

This DS version actually has more features than its Gamecube brother – specifically a wireless Spies versus Mercs mode and the SWAT turn manoeuvre from *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow*. The touch-screen is used to select weapons, change vision modes and as a virtual analogue stick for looking around.

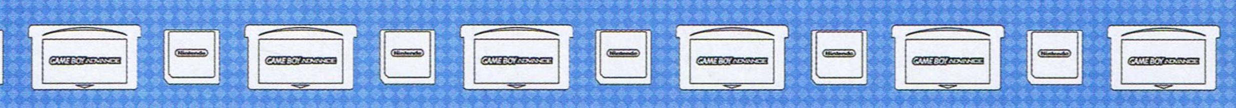
We'll review it next month. In the meantime, here's a selection of stealthy images for you to sneak up on and knife in the back.



△ Sam's thermal and night vision work nicely here.



△ As always, you'll get little lock-picking mini-games.



BLACK AND WHITE: CREATURES

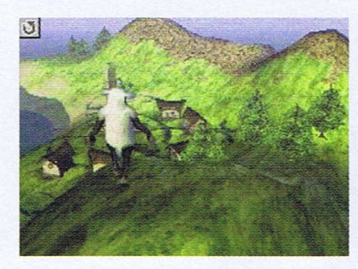
Don't panic – it's in colour, and on two screens.



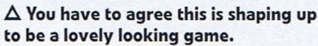
A DS game dedicated to zebras, skunks and dalmations? Thankfully not. *Black And White: Creatures* is a conversion of Peter Molyneux's ambitious god sim/virtual pet hybrid that hit the PC way back in 2001. Despite being created with meaty, high-end PCs in mind, it crumpled slightly under the weight of its own ideas. But now the game has a chance to redeem itself on the DS. Even if the handheld's not a technical marvel, it may be just the right format to do it maximum justice.

Imagine a cross between *Advance Wars* and *Nintendogs*, and you're nearly there. *Black and White: Creatures* gives you a massive beast, which you raise and train to do your bidding. Morality is also important – you can rule with an iron fist or a fluffy mitten.

The stylus should work beautifully for what is, essentially, a mouse-driven game, while the microphone can be used to issue orders to your giant sheep/cow monster thing. And, just like a real god, you'll have the whole world in your hands.







△ You have to agree this is shaping up to be a lovely looking game.

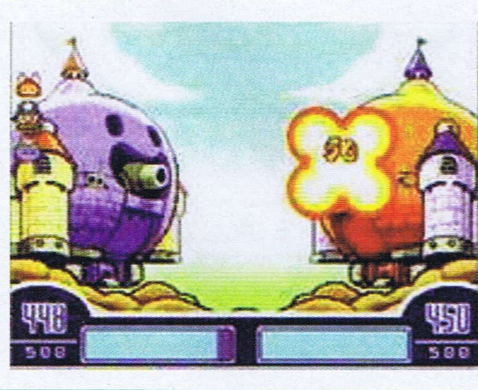


△ Not sure how legal this kind of thing is in the UK, but the cow seems to like it.

SLIME TIME

Square-Enix set to make a mess on your DS.

We're not sure how many times Square-Enix have allowed us to save the world in RPGs, but now it's time to step back from all that grandeur and enjoy something a little bit sillier. *Slime Morimori Dragon Quest 2* for the DS sees the charming blobs of goo from the Dragon Quest series battling it out in their own spin-off title. The Slimes have split themselves up into two factions and have decided to battle it out. Also, each team has access to a Slime Tank that doubles up as a mobile HQ, but that's as much sense as we can currently make of it.







MON DIEU!

Goemon set to return in fine DS style.

It's been too long since we last saw Goemon (or Mystical Ninja, as he's known in the west). Ever since the excellent SNES game and the brilliantly freaky N64 outing, it feels like there's been a great big hole in the software line-ups of both Gamecube and DS in the shape of Goemon's grinning face. But he's back, along with lifelong pal Ebisumaru in the DS title *Ganbare!* It looks like it'll feature the series' trademark mix of madcap action and quirky adventure, but with added multiplayer mini-game goodness to make sure your stylus doesn't get cold.

NEWS WIRES

THE EMPIRE RUBS BACK

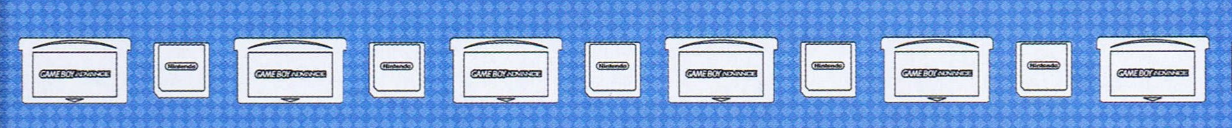
Majesco plans on bringing their long-running PC strategy series *Age Of Empires* to the hallowed ground that is the Nintendo DS during the autumn of 2005. *Age Of Empires: Age Of Kings* will be the first time that the historic and hugely detailed real-time strategy and resource management game has ventured into the world of handhelds, but the DS should be the perfect home for such a complex game. Players will choose an ancient race and nurture them until they're lording it over every other civilization on the planet. Five races will be on offer: Britons, Mongols, Japanese, Franks and Saracens. After *Black And White: Creatures*, we're beginning to spot a pattern emerging – is the DS becoming the natural home for slightly aged PC franchises? What next? *Leisure Suit Larry DS?* So long as the quality's there, this might not be a bad thing.

LICENCE TO THRILL?

Successful Japanese anime and manga franchise, Naruto, has given rise to yet another DS game, tentatively titled *Naruto RPG 2* (see page 52 for our review of the first, and hopefully worst, Naruto DS title). That's '2' because it's the follow-up to the little known (in the west at least) Naruto RPG that was released on the GBA. Naruto RPG proved to be one of the stronger games in the series, which bodes well for this brand new DS instalment. Comic book and anime games are all about bringing the characters to life, which is something that RPGs are far more capable of doing than banal, derivative, side-scrolling beat-'em-up/platformers. Well, that's the theory, anyway.

RAINBOW ROADS

With the GBA having become the number one destination for retro re-releases and updates, it looks like it won't be long before that rose-tinted crown is going to be handed over to our beloved Nintendo DS. After the 'reimagining' of Space Invaders (see our review on page 51), along comes *Rainbow Islands Revolution*, a DS-style revision of the spectacularly cheery and colourful arcade sequel to the equally brilliant *Bubble Bobble*. *Rainbow Islands* saw players using rainbows as platforms to ascend through vertically stacked, hazard-packed levels. Nothing's been confirmed about just how it'll be a revolution, but we expect that you'll be using the stylus to place and shape your rainbows, while the game field will fill both screens. We aren't, however, expecting sponsorship from Skittles.



△ Every version of the game comes with its own unique set of breeds, so choose wisely.

△ Toys can be bought in shops or found while you're out walking your dog.

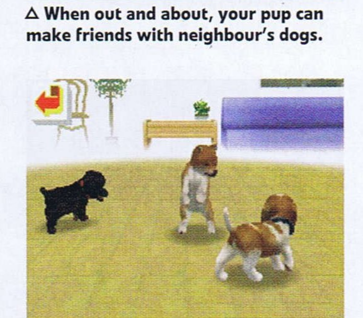
△ When out and about, your pup can make friends with neighbour's dogs.



NINTENDOGS



FROM: NINTENDO **PLAYERS:** 1-2 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **MICROPHONE:** YES **OUT:** NOW (JAPAN) **COST:** ¥5400



△ Each dog has its own personality, you have to get to know your dog.

Can we get 'Shigsy'* to show us his 'red rocket'?



△ Yank the lead to slow your puppy to a walk or to get the little fella running.

*Ger's virtual dog 'Shigsy', that is.



Nintendogs starts out at a kennel which houses three of each breed exclusive to your version of the game, varying in sex and coat. You can watch the puppies as they play in the pound to see which takes your fancy. Once you've chosen one, you can take it home for a tutorial on the basics of training.

The first step is to get it to recognise its name. A light bulb appears at the top right of the screen, and tapping it will activate a little microphone icon above your dog. If you speak clearly enough, a light bulb will pop up above the dog's head to indicate that he has understood. Three or four more calls and your dog will understand its name.

The next step is to teach it its first basic trick – 'Sit'. Calling your dog will bring him down to the lower screen, allowing you to play with him using the stylus. By quickly striking the stylus down the screen, you can manipulate your puppy into a sitting position, whereupon another bulb will pop up, enabling you to record the 'Sit' command. Again, three or four tries are all that's needed for your puppy to learn the trick.

With the basics sorted, it's now up to you how you forge your relationship with your dog. The kind of interaction you have with your puppy can be separated into five areas: play, feeding and grooming, walking, training, and competition.

Play means just that, you can pet your dog, throw it a ball or frisbee, blow bubbles, that kind of thing. Feeding and grooming are all part and parcel of keeping your dog happy. He needs to be washed and brushed to keep him free of fleas and to keep his coat in good condition. And, naturally, he needs to be fed and

> **"THE MINUTE YOU GET YOUR FIRST PUPPY, YOU WILL LOVE IT"**

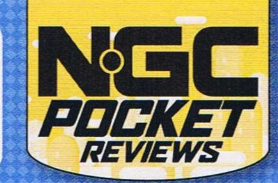

Beyond shadow of a doubt, an essential purchase


Definitely recommended.


Okay, but not a disaster if you miss out.


Disappointing and a waste of good money.


The gaming equivalent of a venereal disease.



HOW YOU SAY...?

Voice recognition has always been pretty cruddy in the past, but Nintendogs seems to have nailed it.



Every time you record a new trick, your dog will let you know if he understands, if you don't make any sense at all, or whether one of your commands conflicts with another, similar sounding order.



If you shout or speak too close to the mic, the sound distorts, so getting a balance between loudness and clarity is the key. Thankfully, your voice is played back to you, so you can tell how clearly you're speaking.



When we first started playing we found that the dogs didn't react to our commands, as though the voice recognition simply wasn't working properly. In actual fact, it's the subtlety of the game at work.



At first, your puppy is pretty unresponsive – obeying you completely one minute and ignoring you the next. Give it time though, and your little mate will do your bidding with almost perfect obedience.



△ Dogs have very different temperaments and will behave accordingly.

watered on a daily basis to stay healthy. Likewise, walking is one of the ways to keep your dog in good condition, but it also gives your puppy the opportunity to meet new dogs and find special items.

These areas of dog management are mostly little chores that ensure everything is running smoothly. However, it's the training and competition aspects that offer the most in terms of reward and depth.

Just as you did with the original 'Name' and 'Sit' commands, by touching your puppy with your stylus, you can get it into various positions: lying on its side, on its back, begging, raising a paw, jumping and so forth. Every time you find a new action, the light bulb will pop up in the corner of the screen to let you know it's a recordable command.

Once a trick has been learned, it's completely up to you to continue using the command – praising your puppy after each successful reaction – to make sure that your dog responds promptly and consistently.

With a well-trained, happy and healthy puppy you can now enter one of the three competitions open to you. Placing first, second or third in competitions will earn money to spend on food, grooming products, new puppies and toys. The more you win, the more goodies you can unlock.



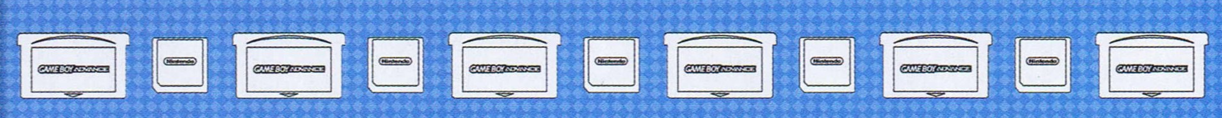


△ Anyone not saying 'aaaah' right now almost certainly has a heart of stone.

△ Your dog will sniff out certain areas and them mark them with urine. Nice.

△ A jumping catch will earn you more points.

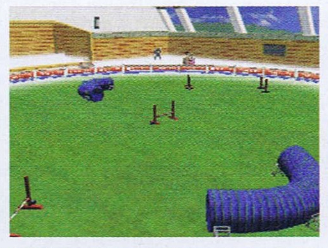


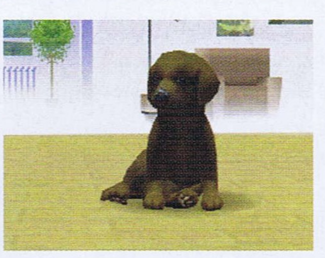


CANINE COMPETITION

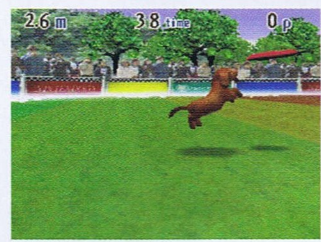
Once you've trained up your pup, there are three competitions you can enter.



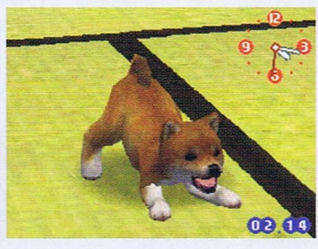












DISC

This is the simplest of them all. You have to throw a frisbee as far as you can, but not so far that your puppy can't catch it. The further it's thrown and successfully caught, the more points you get. As you rise up the ranks, the score needed to place in the top three will increase.

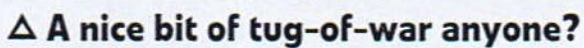
AGILITY

Here you'll test your dog's speed and, er, agility. You have a bunch of gates to jump over, tunnels to run through, see-saws to navigate and slalom-style obstacles that must be tackled in a certain order. The faster you do it, the more points you get, but messing up incurs a penalty point.

OBEDIENCE

You have to get your dog to obey a series of set commands. In the Japanese version it was pretty tough to tell what was required of us, and the later, more advanced levels of the competition not only ask you to make your dog obey, but also to hold their position for a length of time.





△ A nice bit of tug-of-war anyone?



△ You can soap up and rinse your puppy to keep him free of ticks and lice.



△ Anyone whose heart doesn't melt during scenes like this is a very miserable gamer. Here your puppy has found you a present.

Those are the basics of the game then – and it is *very* basic – but as is frequently the case with this type of game, you can't really measure the quality of it just by looking at its structure and the amount of features it happens to have.

First and foremost, *Nintendogs* is one of the most charming games you'll ever play. Its cuteness is undeniable and, despite the fact that you often feel it's a little silly, you can't help but get sucked in by it. The minute you get your first puppy, you *will* love it. No, we know it's not a real dog, and yes it's really just a bunch of ones and zeroes encased in plastic, but *damn* if we didn't feel ourselves getting all gooey inside when our dog caught his first frisbee or mastered a new trick.

Most of your emotional attachment comes from the fact that each puppy is superbly animated. *Nintendogs* does puppies so well, with a wide range of expressions and behaviour patterns (like trepidation, playfulness, coyness and boisterousness) that really help you get a handle on the mood and personality of your dog.

Each puppy is different and will react to toys in different ways. One may like tissues, while another may fear them. Likewise, one puppy may go mad for a blue frisbee, but not the red one. Experimenting with what your dog likes is just another part of building up your ridiculous bond with a creature that doesn't really exist.

> **"ONE OF THE MOST CHARMING GAMES YOU'LL EVER PLAY"**

△ Lets not beat around the bush here – that hat looks bloody stupid…

△ You can visit shops, kennels and there's even a doggy hotel.

△ Each puppy has a number of areas that need maintaining, such as coat condition, thirst and hunger. Make sure that you feed your puppies at least twice a day to keep them nice and healthy.

△ The more you play, the better stuff you can unlock for your dogs to play with, like this great remote-controlled helicopter.

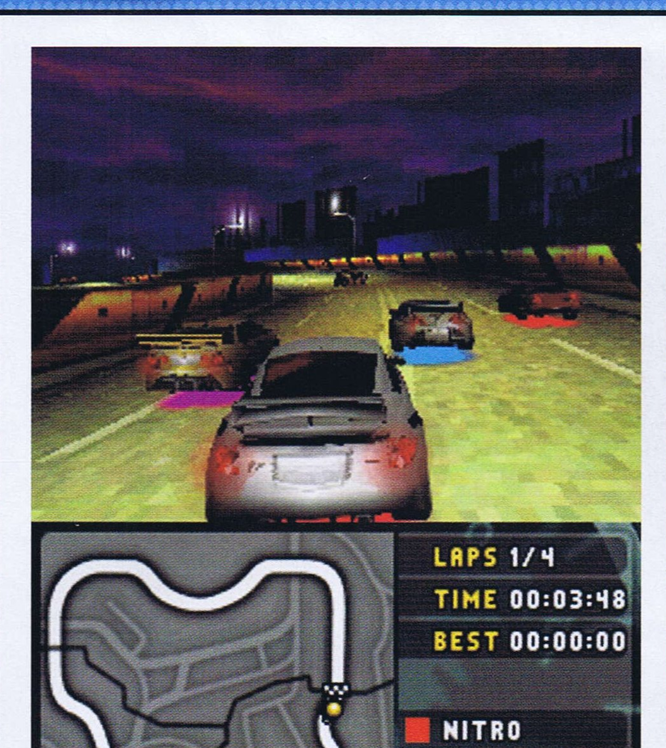
But we love it. Seriously. True, there isn't much to do in the game, but it isn't meant to be played for hours at a time. In fact, the game discourages you from doing so. You can only teach a few tricks and compete in three competitions a day, so it's something that you have to dip into a couple of times a day, making it more of a companion for your DS than a solid gaming experience.

But that's not necessarily a bad thing. Restricting your play makes you want to play it more, makes you appreciate your time with your dog and look forward to the next day, when you can both learn and compete together.

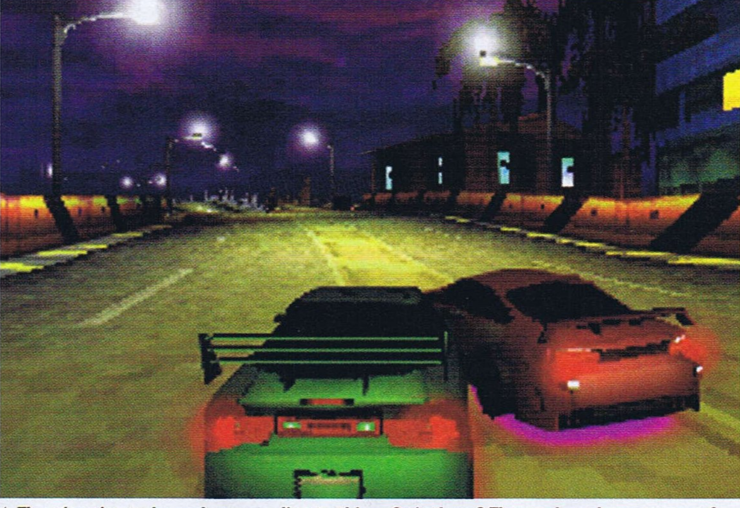
It's all heart-warming stuff and despite being so reliant on voice-recognition (which is usually badly implemented in games), it works remarkably well. One word of advice though, we'd hold out for an English language release before diving in, as there's loads of important text and you'll be missing out on a great deal if you're not able to read it. It's only this language barrier that's preventing us from handing over a perfect five.

GERAINT EVANS

DUAL ★★★★☆
TOUCH ★★★★★
4



△ Unfortunately, the lack of any decent analogue control can make situations like this absolutely ruinous for your overall time and placing.



△ There's going to be no happy ending to this… Or is there? The crash replays are one of the only times that you get to see the 3D polygons of your car in all their glory.



△ This is 'engine tuning'.



△ As we have come to expect from NFS games, the car modding is both extensive and exhaustive.

△ Unfortunately, the game relies on upgrading as much as driving skills.

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2

Flashy racing but without the flashing…



FROM: EA **PLAYERS:** 1-4 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **MICROPHONE:** NO **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £30



Handheld conversions are almost always reduced, cut down and hacked back versions of the Gamecube incarnation, and *NFSU 2* on the DS is no different. Except that this shrunken racer has missed out one feature from its big console cousin that will not be missed: the ruinous, epileptic fit inducing frame-rate. Where the original stuttered, this tiny DS effort purrs along at a kitten-smooth 60 frames-per-second.

Along with the strobe-like flickering, the cloying story and the painful product-placement have also departed. Their departure has made this a much more polished conversion that offers light, bright handling, varied and lurid modding options and underneath all that a purer, more playable game.

> **"THIS DS EFFORT PURRS ALONG AT A KITTEN-SMOOTH 60 FRAMES-PER-SECOND"**

And without Kelly Brook troubling you between races, you are free to skip between the Drag, Circuit, Own The Zone and Bonus modes in the same way as the GBA version. You gradually use points snaffled on the tarmac to boost performance and build up body kits on 17 different and neatly rendered 3D cars.

What matters more than the amount of polygons on these modelled motors is how often you get to see them. Because these speed




EVERY BLING OR NOTHING

Collecting points is even more important than collecting ASBOS, as they dictate what you can drive or modify.





The parts that can be changed in the garage are split between the free cosmetic changes, such as spoilers and bumpers, and the much more costly, but much more worthwhile, engine and suspension upgrades.



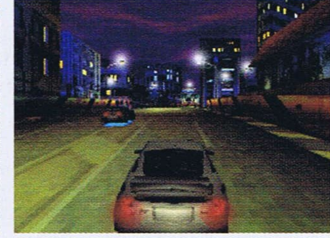
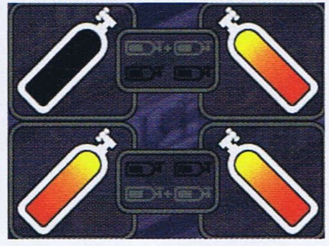


Despite making you spend points on parts, the game doesn't actually mention how much each upgrade improves your performance. So you could be wasting your cash on something you don't need.





Straight-line speed matters more in the drag races than driving ability, so it's vital that you enhance your car as much as possible, because you've got to complete every event before you can move on.

You aren't allowed free reign in which bits you buy, either. They are unlocked as you advance through the races, so you can't concentrate on one car, instead you have to buy a replacement when the game dictates.



△ **Exclusively to the DS version, you can now draw your own decal designs with the stylus.**

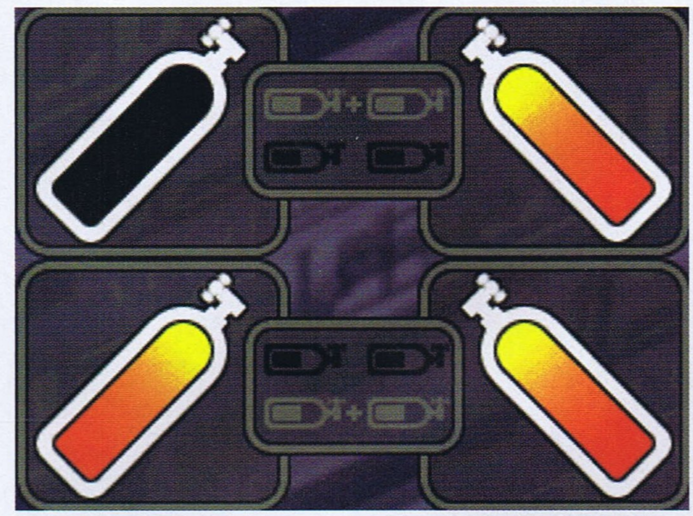
machines don't stick to the road with the mystical glue or the super-gravity that holds down other racers, instead a glancing blow from a bus or a high-speed sideswipe from a rival can often leave you somersaulting or inspecting your front bumper. This is when you get to see those polygons at work. So it isn't quite *Burnout*, but with smart rivals who can also be rammed off the road, there is more rough and tumble in this racing than you might expect.

The car's handling also drives a similarly precise line between credible cornering and arcade-style, foot-to-the-floor racing. So while power slides are definitely off the menu, you won't win many races by bouncing off the walls. Instead you must rely on picking out the hidden shortcuts and managing to find a route through the impressively dense urban traffic.

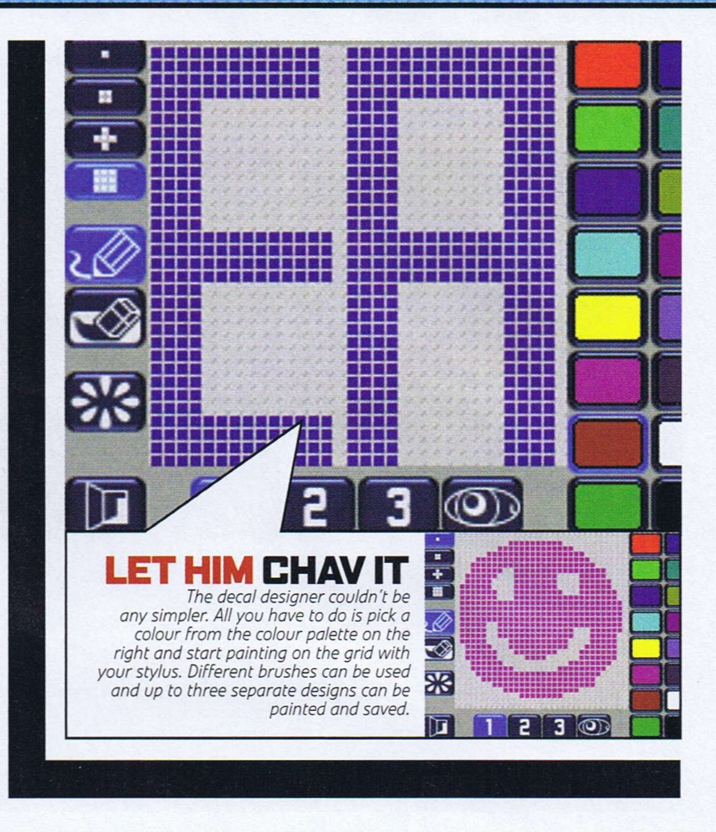
Not that blazing a trail through the fictional city of Bayview is always easy. Although the complex and often perplexing lighting filters and reflections of the original game have been removed, the night and fog of this imaginary metropolis have closed in, meaning that you spend as much time in the shadows as Sam Fisher. Dark objects on dark backdrops, drawn from a dark palette can often dissolve into each other on the DS's LCD screens, so despite the smooth motion and great sensation of speed, you still find yourself holding the machine a nose's length away, peering into the gloom with crossed eyes.

Luckily, one thing you won't need to cross is your fingers, because while the detailed cityscapes of skyscrapers and neon lights may pop-up somewhat alarmingly, the road itself, and any vehicles on it, appear early enough for you to avoid them. So even if a bus pulls out in the middle of your lane or an airport checkpoint slides into view, you should have time to spot it and avoid it. That is unless you happen to be checking out the graphics in the rear-facing view, because unlike most 3D racers, there is no replay option with which to admire *NFSU 2*'s smooth polygons.

And you will almost certainly want to bask in your triumphs, because with three difficulty settings and opponents that constantly grow ever

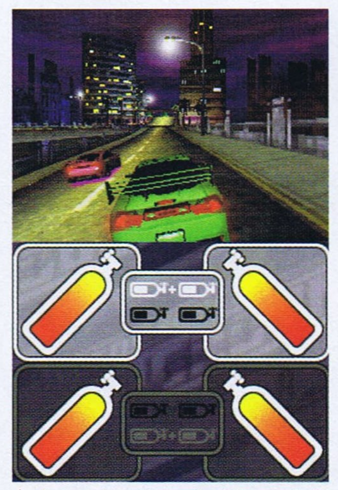


△ As with previous versions, how and when you use your nitrous oxide is key.

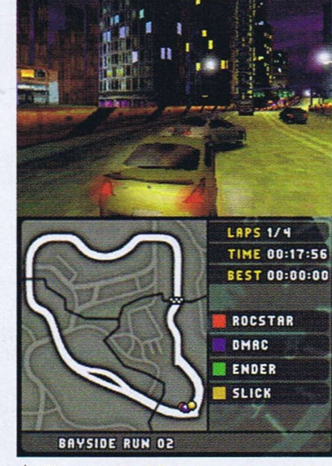


LET HIM CHAV IT

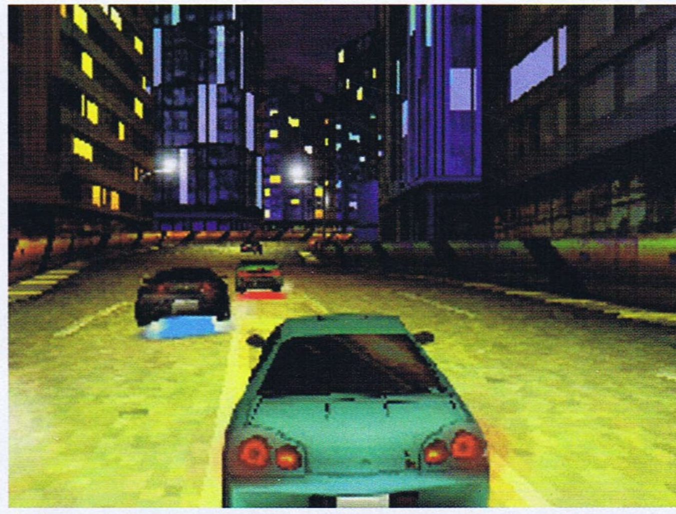
The decal designer couldn't be any simpler. All you have to do is pick a colour from the colour palette on the right and start painting on the grid with your stylus. Different brushes can be used and up to three separate designs can be painted and saved.



△ A straight – the perfect time to let fly with the nitrous oxide.



△ The streets of Bayview are as dark, bleak and neon lit as they ever were.



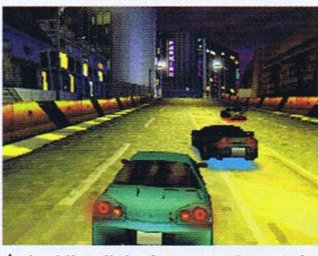
△ You can't win races without neons (caption may not contain actual truth).

swifter – although not smarter – the game offers a decent challenge.

Along with the standard Circuit racing option come two others: the Drag mode, where gear changes and a certain amount of chance matter more than steering, and the interesting and original Own The Zone mode. In this strange hybrid, getting first place on the podium doesn't matter, instead you have to set the fastest times through a number of stages while another driver tears around the same track trying to claim the concrete for his own. And since you need to complete every stage to move on, it is fortunate that this new addition to the game stands up to the rest of it.

However, unlike these two enjoyable extras, the Bonus mode looks as tacked on as a body kit on a Vauxhall Nova. These dull add-ons punctuate your progress with such charmless challenges as steering a small dot along a valley of spikes.

While it apparently represents the dark art of engine tuning to the untrained eye, it smacks more of a last-gasp attempt to squeeze some stylus action into a game that doesn't use the DS's power and facilities for anything beyond punting polygons around the screen.



△ Luckily, all the framerate issues of the GC version have been resolved.

> **"THERE IS PLENTY OF MILEAGE HERE, BUT WITHOUT THE GAMECUBE'S FRAMERATE"**

Apart from moving through menus and pointless turbo-touching, the only other chance you'll have to use the second screen comes with the motor modification options.

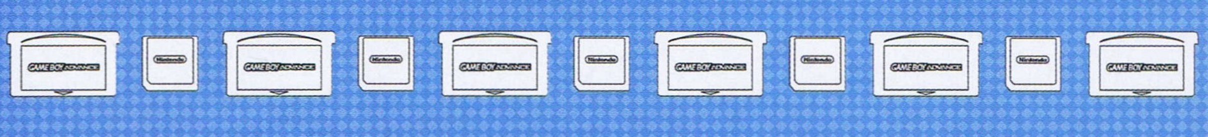
But having the power to sketch out your own stickers is a great one that has been neatly implemented despite the slightly clumsy layout of the paint palette, which infuriatingly places the dreaded Delete All option in an all too clickable place. It allows you to easily create logos and designs that would be almost impossible to draw with a pad, or to simply scrawl friend-offending obscenities across your bonnet.

With a difficulty curve that depends more on buying the right racing parts than your skill behind the wheel, there have to be some questions about the game's longevity. After all, you could be the best driver in the entire game, but if your car isn't fast enough you'll never progress. Who wants to spend time back tracking and repeating old races just to eventually move forward?

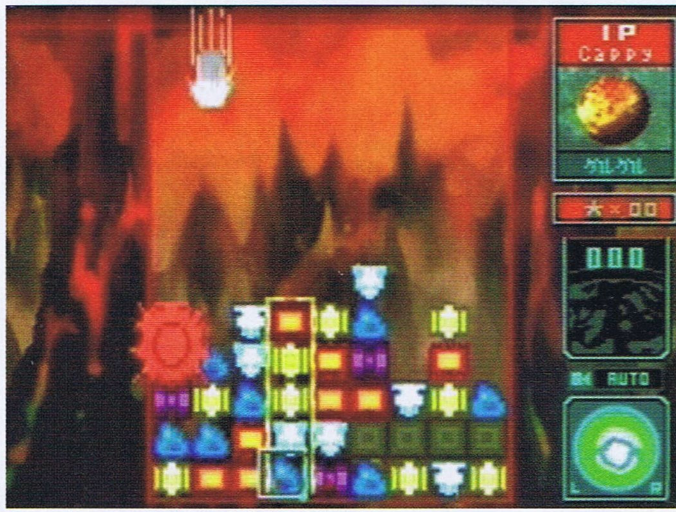
But if you and your multiple cartridge-owning friends aren't afraid of some hard driving, there is plenty of mileage here, but without the Gamecube's framerate.

ALEX COOKE









△ Each type of alien represents a planet with different game rules. On some worlds the blocks fall faster and lift off slower. On others they're made of men.





METEOS



FROM: BANDAI
MICROPHONE: NO
PLAYERS: 1-4
OUT: NOW
SINGLE CART LINK: YES
COST: £30

Achieving lift-off for DS puzzlers.

Puzzle games are unique in being twice as hard to explain as they are to play. Try telling anybody how to play *Meteos* and you'll be greeted by a blank stare of indifference, as it really does sound like another unnecessarily complicated exercise in tarting up one of the simplest game concepts around.

But pass your sceptical friend a DS with a copy of *Meteos*, and you'll have a hard time prying it from his sweaty hands before the power runs out. This is clearly quite a bit smarter than the usual take on the familiar 'match some coloured blocks' theme.

The difference here is that, rather than disappearing once you've matched the coloured blocks, they form a rocket-powered platform which blasts off up the screen, carrying all the other blocks that were resting on top of it. Then it starts to sink back down to the bottom again, as gravity reels it in.

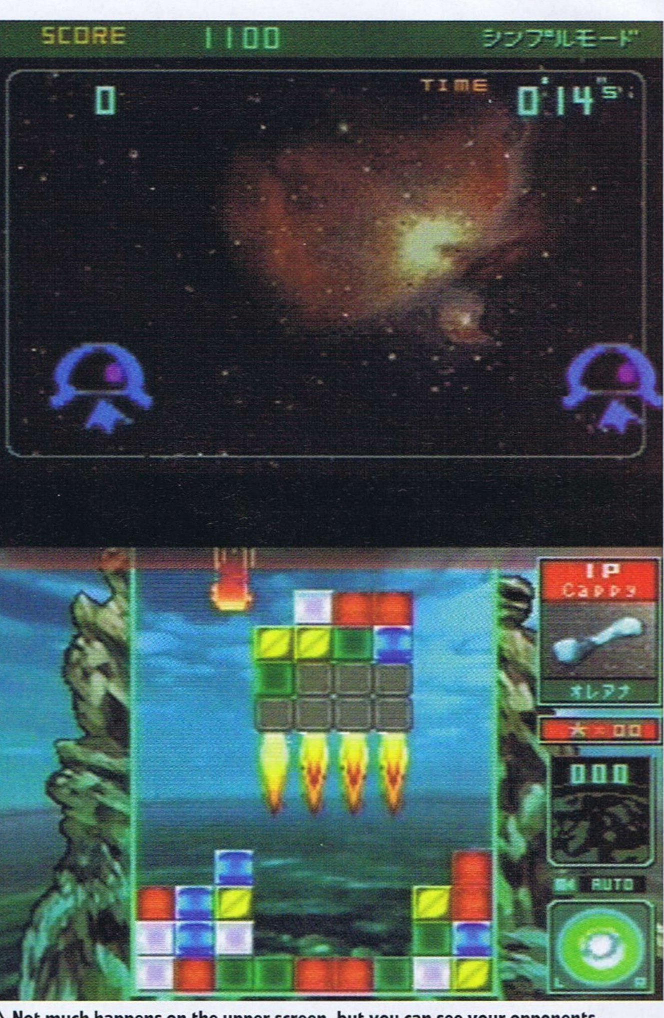
To get rid of the whole thing you've got to match further blocks within the hovering platform, which will hopefully provide enough fuel to boost it into orbit. Depending on the gravity conditions in the level you're playing, a large lump of blocks – which can be the size of the entire screen – might require several boosts before it finally vanishes.

All the while, you're coping with an endless shower of new blocks from above, as well as debris sent over by computer-controlled rivals or human players – all of which weigh down your rocket launches. You'll have to adapt your strategy subconsciously and at a nanosecond's notice. This seems daunting at first, but a few hours with *Meteos* should be enough to convert anybody's brain into an astrophysics supercomputer.

Played at an incredible pace, in an explosion of garish colour, *Meteos* looks like it should be ludicrously hard to understand. Thanks to the no-brain stylus controls, whereby you can only drag blocks up and down within a single column, it could hardly be easier. Throw in a very nice bit of wireless multiplayer, even though it's slightly stripped down when all four players don't own a copy of the game, and you've got the best puzzle game on the DS.

MARTIN KITTS

"CLEARLY QUITE A BIT SMARTER THAN ORDINARY PUZZLE GAMES"



△ Not much happens on the upper screen, but you can see your opponents.

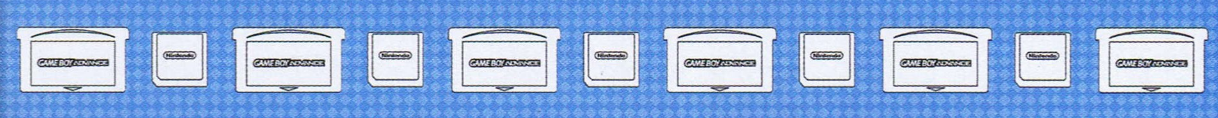


△ Due to the deadness of our DS grabber, we had to use Jap screens.



△ The platform on the right is lifting off while the other one touches down.



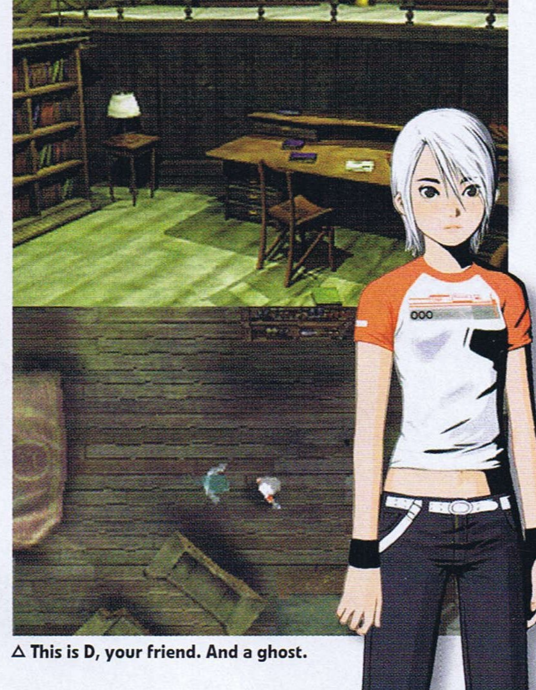




△ The boat captain is understandably freaked out by Blood Edward Island.



△ You have to unlock pieces of the puzzle to progress.



△ This is D, your friend. And a ghost.

TRACE MEMORY

FROM: NINTENDO **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **MICROPHONE:** NO **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £30

The game formerly known as Another Code…





Your average teenager would be over the moon to receive a Nintendo DS on their birthday, but not Ashley Mizuki Robins. But then she's not exactly suffering the same strains of teenage angst as most girls: there's no worrying about who is better out of the Noize Next Door and McFly, and no trying to find an Emily the Strange pencil case that *so* goes with her purple and lime nail varnish, here.

Ashley has, for her 14th birthday, just found out that her father is still alive, which is quite a surprise considering that he supposedly died when she was three. Her present from her suddenly-resurrected dad is a Nintendo DS. Well, not quite… It looks almost exactly like a DS, but it's called a DAS – Dual Another System. And, no, it's not just a black-market knock-off, it's a gadget invented by Ashley's dad, a brilliant scientist who's now in hiding on a remote retreat known as Blood Edward Island. No wonder, Nintendo's lawyers are probably baying for his blood.

The DAS isn't a console, but a glorified PDA, a gadget that only Ashley can use (which, beautifully, you unlock at the start of the game with your fingerprint). It plays messages from her dad that come on DAS carts – which look identical to DS games – and doubles up as a camera. With her weirdest birthday ever swirling around her, Ashley heads off to Blood Edward Island, accompanied by her Aunt Jessica.

> **"ONE OF THE SWEETEST MEMORIES YOU'RE LIKELY TO HAVE FOR QUITE SOME TIME"**

Even during the opening cutscene, it's easy to see *Trace Memory*'s beauty: while Ashley snoozes on the lower screen, her dreams are displayed on the upper screen.

The game is basically a point-and-click adventure, but one that's gloriously presented. The bottom screen shows a bird's-eye view of the environment, while the other displays a detailed view of any nearby person or item that deserves more attention. If you tap the chat/look icon, the person or item will drop onto the lower screen, enabling you to interact with them/it using your stylus to uncover a little more of the puzzle-filled challenge that stands between Ashley and her dad.



The many puzzles in the game are solved through through mini-games, such as piecing together a ripped-up diary page, or throwing a metal ball into a statue's cupped hand.



△ The game could be played purely with the stylus. There's no D-pad needed.



△ Subject strands appear on the bottom screen during conversations.

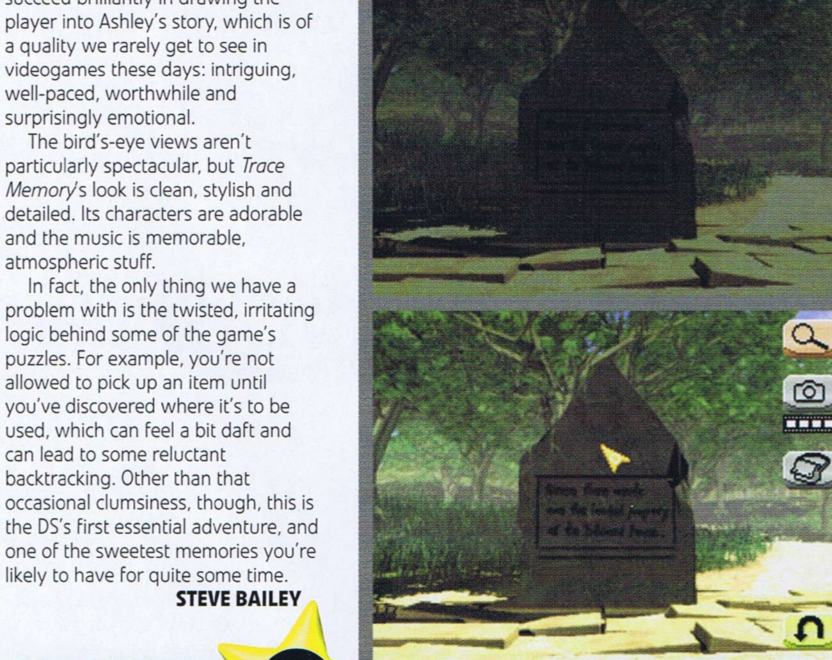
These moments are anything but diversion for the sake of variety. They succeed brilliantly in drawing the player into Ashley's story, which is of a quality we rarely get to see in videogames these days: intriguing, well-paced, worthwhile and surprisingly emotional.

The bird's-eye views aren't particularly spectacular, but *Trace Memory*'s look is clean, stylish and detailed. Its characters are adorable and the music is memorable, atmospheric stuff.

In fact, the only thing we have a problem with is the twisted, irritating logic behind some of the game's puzzles. For example, you're not allowed to pick up an item until you've discovered where it's to be used, which can feel a bit daft and can lead to some reluctant backtracking. Other than that occasional clumsiness, though, this is the DS's first essential adventure, and one of the sweetest memories you're likely to have for quite some time.

STEVE BAILEY

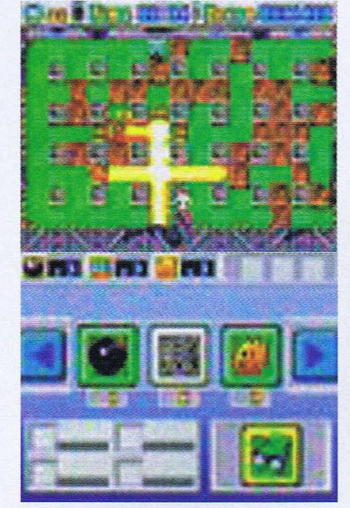




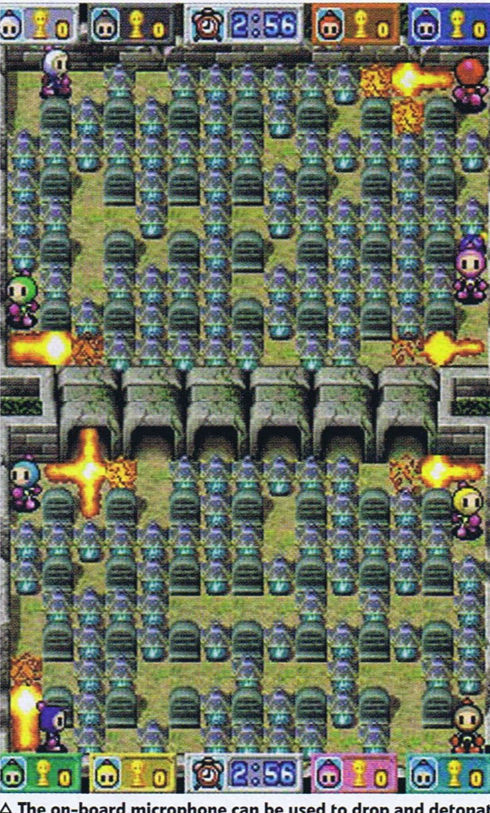
△ If you want to take a closer look at something, you simply have to double-tap it with the stylus.



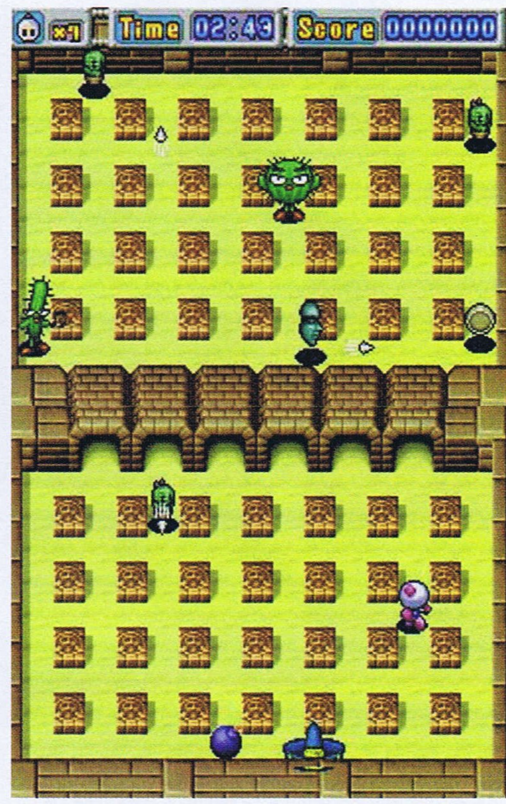
△ Hmm, what could possibly be going on here? A broken sign with a garbled message? Could that be a clue? Nah...



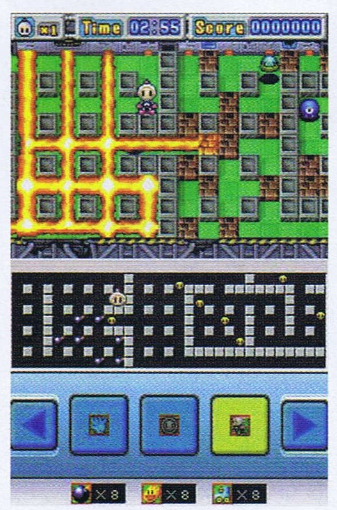
△ There are many new modes for DS.



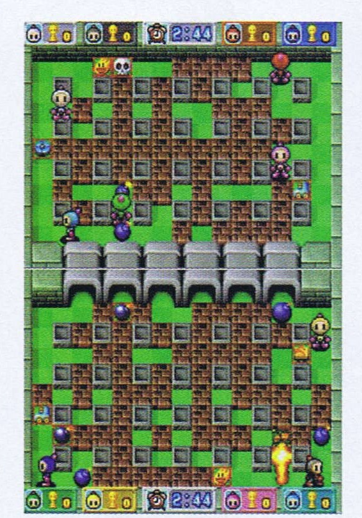
△ The on-board microphone can be used to drop and detonate bombs, but pressing A is just a little bit easier.



△ Dropping detonators and waiting to set them off allows you to set up complex grids of flaming death for the Baroms.



△ Solo mode isn't the best, sadly.



△ Blocks appear as time runs out.

BOMBERMAN DS



FROM: UBISOFT **PLAYERS:** 1-8 **SINGLE CART LINK:** YES **MICROPHONE:** YES **OUT:** 1ST JULY **COST:** £30

It's a blast for many, but just a dud with one.



he less money you spend on *Bomberman DS*, the more fun you'll have. If you pay the full £30 for your dose of DS detonation, you'll be left out of pocket and scowling with a Scrooge-like grimace. But if you share the cost across eight chums, then not only will you only have to pay a measly £3.75 each, but you'll all be grinning with pyromaniacal pleasure.

This is because, as has always been the way with Hudson's Hi-Ex stalwart, the solo option is both pedestrian and mildly frustrating. Suspect devices are planted on a grid and Baroms are blasted with only a few twists in the tricky, but numerous levels. Little advantage has been taken of the dual screens either, with the top screen dedicated to the game while the stylus merely allows you to select which power-up to use. Which is a bit pointless when you always want all of them. Right now.

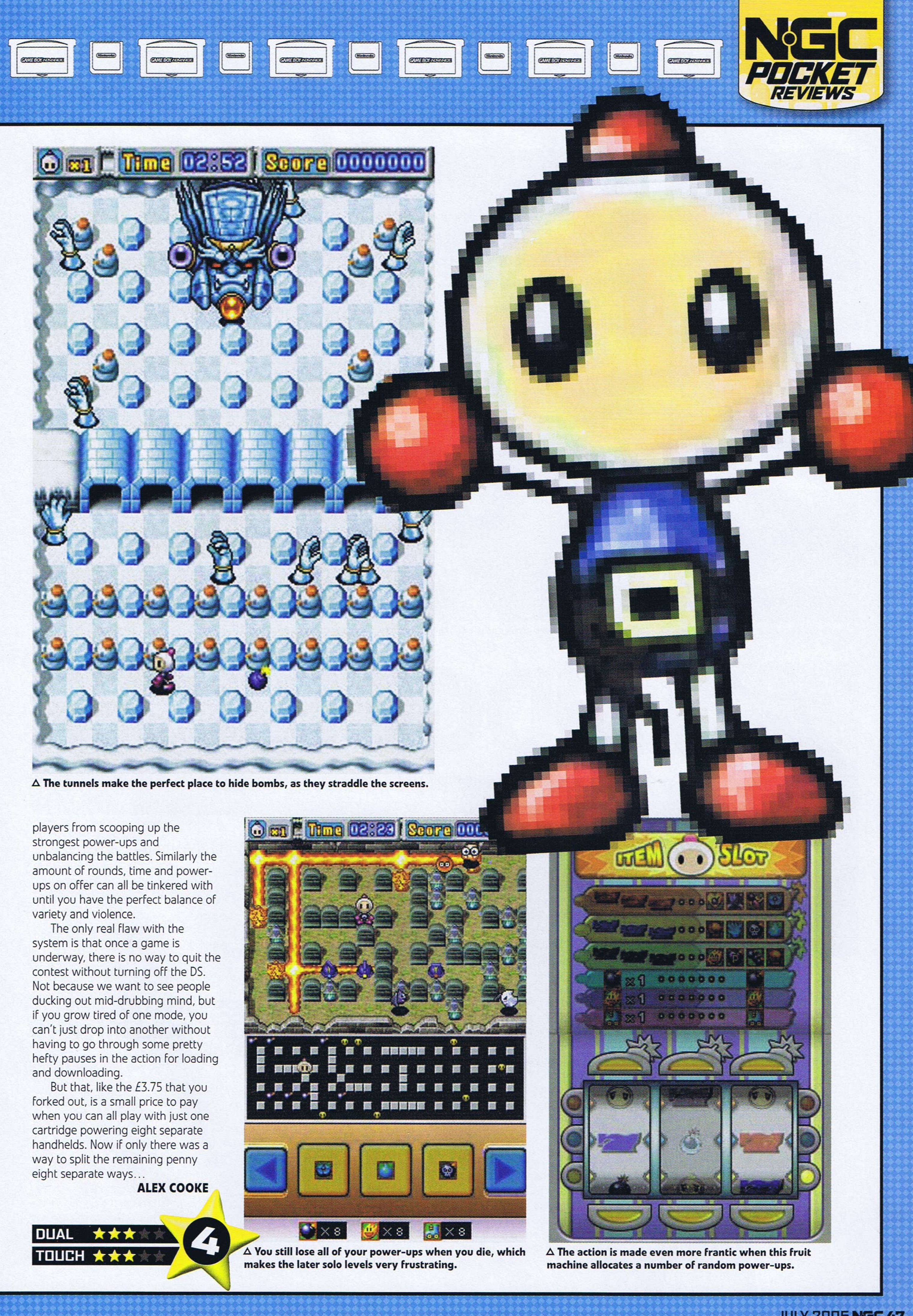
But once you wander into WiFi range of seven other players, then your single cartridge becomes the hub of all manner of arcade mayhem. From the moment you link up with your mates in the Battle mode, 30 distinct and vastly improved multiplayer modes appear. And if you haven't got that many friends to hand, you can always opt to add CPU opponents into the mix.

> **"IT'S A SMALL AMOUNT TO PAY WHEN YOU CAN ALL PLAY WITH JUST ONE CARTRIDGE"**

While the stylus control is quickly sacrificed on the altar of amusement, you won't miss it because the moment that the second screen is opened up to become part of the arena, innovation pops up at every turn. So the new tunnels that divide the two playing areas make ideal traps, while automatic turrets spit explosives and see-saws toss lobbed bombs back from whence they came.

But the variety doesn't end there; each one of the levels adds something extra. Merry-Go-Crown, for example, forces the players to jostle and blast a path towards a conveyor belt in the hope of scooping the royal headwear as it sails past (just think of an explosive version of the scrum at Heathrow's baggage claim). While Inferno – one of the finest and most frenetic of all the options – gives each player a random number of power-ups before they even start and doles out numerous nasty extras as the anarchy unfolds.

The flexibility of each option is also astonishing. Not only can you pick the amount of Bombermen and pair them up in teams, but the handicap system can stop the best



△ The tunnels make the perfect place to hide bombs, as they straddle the screens.

players from scooping up the strongest power-ups and unbalancing the battles. Similarly the amount of rounds, time and power-ups on offer can all be tinkered with until you have the perfect balance of variety and violence.

The only real flaw with the system is that once a game is underway, there is no way to quit the contest without turning off the DS. Not because we want to see people ducking out mid-drubbing mind, but if you grow tired of one mode, you can't just drop into another without having to go through some pretty hefty pauses in the action for loading and downloading.

But that, like the £3.75 that you forked out, is a small price to pay when you can all play with just one cartridge powering eight separate handhelds. Now if only there was a way to split the remaining penny eight separate ways…

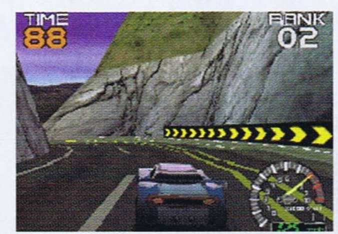
ALEX COOKE

DUAL ★★★
TOUCH ★★★
4

△ You still lose all of your power-ups when you die, which makes the later solo levels very frustrating.

△ The action is made even more frantic when this fruit machine allocates a number of random power-ups.


△ There are plenty of cars to unlock.



△ It's no *NFS*, but it looks okay.



△ You have to master drifting corners.



△ The earlier GP tracks prove most entertaining – later tracks turn out to be a test of your staying power, though.

RIDGE RACER



FROM: NAMCO **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **MICROPHONE:** NO **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £30

A white knuckle ride in more ways than one…

It's somewhat mystifying why this hasn't come out sooner. *Ridge Racer* has been out in the US for ages now, and is one of those well renowned series that makes for perfect launch game fodder. Still, better late than never…

Saying that though, some of the people who pick this up will get a distinct feeling of déjà vu, which is understandable when you consider that this is pretty much a direct port of the N64 game that came out five years ago. That's not necessarily a bad thing; the N64 game was one of the best racers on the system and, for the most part, it holds up well on the DS… for the most part.



On the surface it's everything you would ever want from a racing game: it runs at a speedy pace and although it can occasionally be a little jerky, the traditional arcade handling and emphasis on drifting around corners is absolutely spot on.

It feels and plays just how you would expect a DS version of *Ridge Racer* to play. It proves itself acceptable in that respect, but unfortunately 'acceptable' is as good as it gets…

> **"IT WILL INEVITABLY INFURIATE ALL BUT THE MOST BULLISH AND PERSISTENT GAMER"**

There are definitely some problems and disappointments here. Just like *Mario 64*, the transition from the N64 to the DS hasn't been particularly smooth. Analogue controls have been shoehorned onto the touch-screen with very little success. Should you want more precision than the D-pad will allow, you can use the touch-screen to manipulate a virtual steering wheel with your stylus.

Unfortunately this doesn't work well. In fact it's downright messy, frustrating and about as inaccessible and unintuitive as it gets. Not what you want to hear from a racer that demands precision and derives most of its longevity from trying to shave milliseconds off your best times.

It's here that the game ultimately falls flat and in the long run proves itself excruciatingly frustrating – it gets brutally tough about two-thirds of the way through the game. You're constantly jostling for position against an insanely aggressive pack of racers around some pretty narrow and twisting sections of tracks. This is






△ The first person mode is great, although passing traffic can be tricky.



△ Because of the poor touch-screen controls, you're forced onto the D-pad.



△ Night time driving – and the dips in frame-rate that inevitably ensue – can be particularly hard on the eyes.



△ Although it's no *NFSU 2*, the cars are slightly customisable.



△ There are plenty of tracks, but the scenery stays the same throughout.

made all the tougher by the fact that it's exceedingly difficult to accurately judge the width of your car in the first-person view, making speed-ruining collisions inevitable.

This, combined with the rather cumbersome D-pad control method, makes progressing through the later stages supremely difficult as you simply don't have the necessary level of control that is afforded by an analogue stick. The result is a game that will inevitably infuriate all but the most bullish and persistent gamer, which, for an arcade racer, simply isn't good enough.

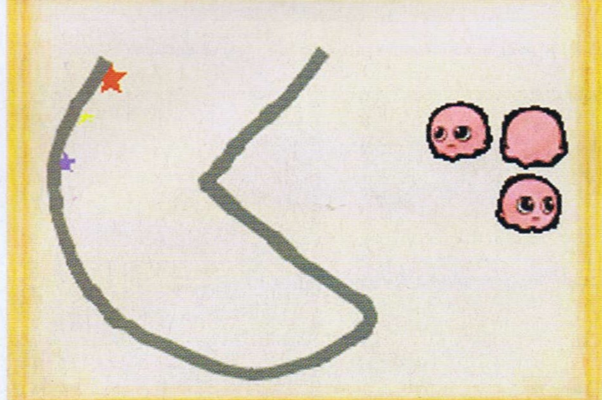
GERAINT EVANS



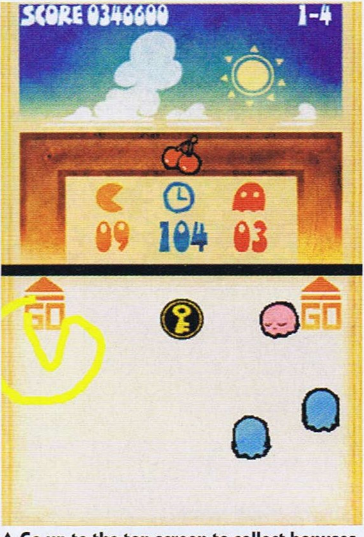


△ New vehicles are unlocked by racing them one-on-one in Car Attack mode.

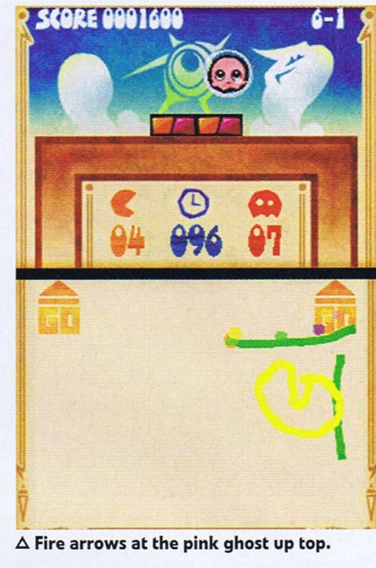




△ Pac-Man isn't a looker. What did Mrs Pac-Man ever see in him?



△ Go up to the top screen to collect bonuses.

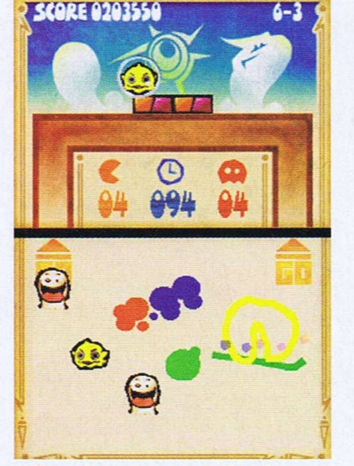


△ Fire arrows at the pink ghost up top.



△ Run over a key smbol to unlock the path.





△ The paint prevents you drawing.

PAC-PIX

FROM: NAMCO **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO
MICROPHONE: NO **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £30

It's Pac-Man's finest moment since 1982…



It's a good job this isn't Link-Pix, at least Pac-Man is easy to draw. Almost too easy – many a time you'll try to draw a bomb, only for the game to think that you've scribbled a Pac-Man and a mutated yellow blob will fly across the screen.

If *Pac-Pix* was as simple as just sitting back, drawing the Man and watching as he gobbles up ghosts, this would be kids' stuff, but after chapter four it all kicks off in brilliant style.

The ghosts are canny little creatures; if they're not darting all over the screen, they're floating inside bubbles on the top screen or sitting inside blocks. But your drawing skills don't stop with Pac-Man – draw an arrow on the bottom screen and it will take out a ghost up top, scribble a bomb and it will destroy the blocks. But it all gets harder as the ghosts on the top screen will sit behind blocks, so you have to deflect your arrows off mirrors. Then there are the numbered ghosts, which can only be caught in sequence.

The best thing about all this is that you have to think of a strategy before you start – do you gobble up all of the ghosts on the bottom screen first and kill off some of your Pacs, or do you risk running out of time by shooting down all the enemies above and trying to eat them all in one go? Either way, at some point you'll be frantically scribbling as many yellow dudes as you can as you try to finish off five ghosts in ten seconds.

> **"THE BEST THING IS THAT YOU HAVE TO THINK OF A STRATEGY"**

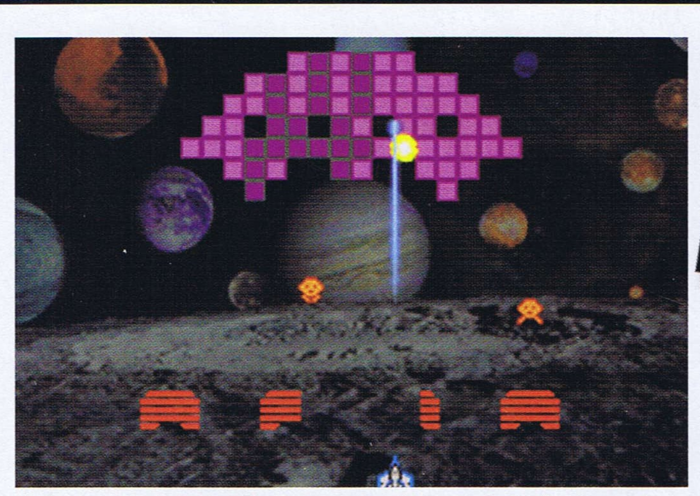
And if you fail? It's back to the start of the chapter. *Pac-Pix* is great fun, but it's frustrating, especially when you get to the boss levels. For the first one you have to draw a massive Pac to chew a big purple ghost, and later on you've got to fire arrows at a ghost to shoot snow off its body, then break the rope it's hanging on before eating him. In 90 seconds. Just as you've worked out what to do, the time will be halfway down and you'll have to do the whole chapter again.

If you're getting annoyed, go to the Gallery mode, draw a bum with your stylus and watch a fart shoot out of your artistic arse. You'll be smiling again before long.

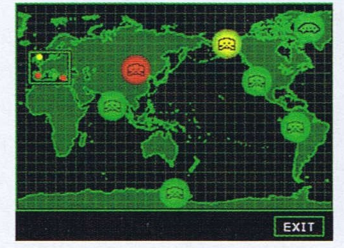
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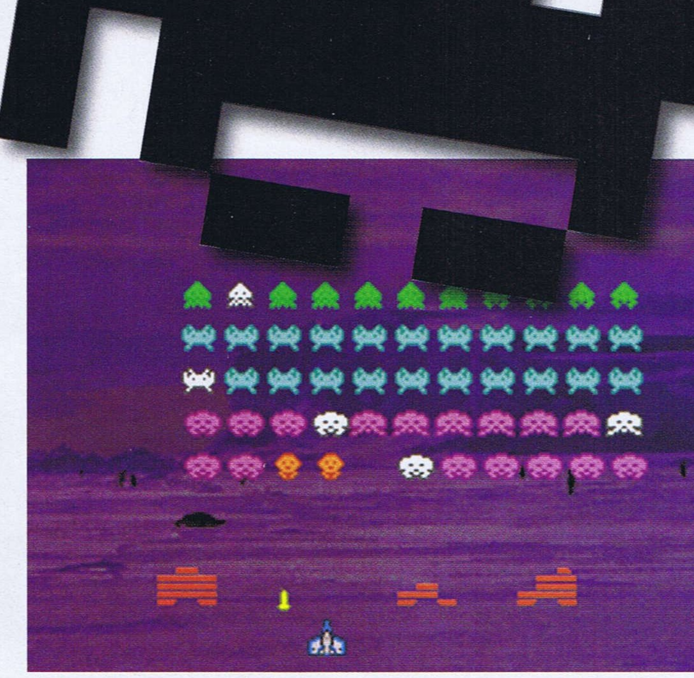
Δ Shoot out the individual pixels of one gigantic invader in the New Age mode.



Δ Each level has a photo background based on a famous landmark.



Δ Shoot only the purple alien. The others will drop on your head.



Δ The white aliens will split into two orange ones when you shoot them.

SPACE INVADERS REVOLUTION

FROM: RISING STAR **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **MICROPHONE:** NO **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £20

Back to the future with the oldest, creakiest shoot-'em-up in the history of videogames.



In a 1980s arcade, shoving a two pence piece the wrong way up the coin-return hole would add free credits to the crusty old *Space Invaders* machine in the corner… or so the bigger boys told us. Trying it in this version has no effect, but you do get to start the game by dropping an imaginary 10p in the correct slot – the safest way to avoid a beating at the hands of the arcade operator.

As you would expect from a DS conversion, authenticity isn't much of a concern. You can play a basic version of the game using the stylus to work an on-screen joystick if you're a retro-obsessed masochist, but the best stuff is all built into a New Age update developed with the assistance of one of the men behind the original *Space Invaders*.

The New Age update is an assortment of Invaders-based challenges ranging from the predictable – vanishing aliens, aliens that can take several bullets, etc – to the amusingly inventive. One level sees you facing off against the craft you piloted in the original version, perhaps as a reminder that sending out a single, slow-moving tank capable of firing one bullet at a time wasn't the cleverest way to defend the earth in the first place.

> **"THE BEST STUFF IS ALL BUILT INTO A NEW AGE UPDATE"**

Once you've completed each challenge three times you can move on to a fresh one, which is where the game shoots itself in the foot. Although it's keeping track of your score, you only get to find out what it is during the bonus rounds. Surely the sole point in playing a shoot-'em-up is to try to beat your score? Here you're effectively playing for fun, and although it's worth repeating the levels for the chance to try out new weapons, we can't help but think it would have been better if it were arranged in a more traditional way.

MARTIN KITTS

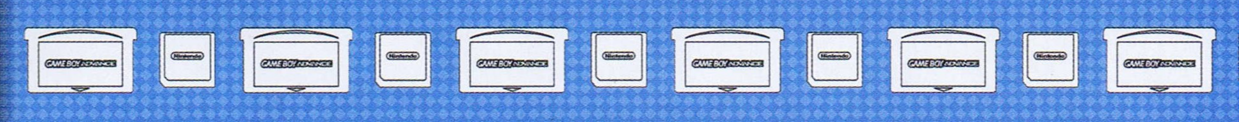




Δ Choose from six power-up items on the lower screen. Easy, right?



Δ Use the stylus to move the joystick while your ship fires automatically.





△ As well as punch-punch-punch combos, you can knock opponents into the air with an uppercut. Not that it leads to any further combo possibilities, though.



△ The fat one at the back is probably 'in goal'. Kick his face off, regardless.



△ That crow pushes you off platforms and makes your cheeks go crimson.



△ Now this is likeable – if you blow on the microphone, you'll spit flames.

△ The bottom screen is where all the pretty happens. There's not much…

NARUTO DS

 **FROM:** TOMY **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **MICROPHONE:** YES **OUT:** NOW (JAP) **COST:** ¥5040 (£25)

Very few people were kung fu fighting.

Side-scrolling action platformers have long been the lifeblood of the GBA's software catalogue, but that doesn't mean that the majority of them are actually any good. Even Naruto made a GBA appearance in this guise. It was very similar to this DS outing and struggled just as much to be noticed.

Based on the anime and manga franchise, Tomy's Naruto games have seen plenty of action in Japan. And although finding favour with import fans here, there aren't enough of them to demand a release outside of Naruto's home territory. Being a fan is an important part of enjoying Naruto games – they're not rubbish, but they're dull enough to be a turn-off for anyone who cares more about what they're playing than who they're playing as.

Naruto DS is a mixture of platforming and fighting, and is in no danger of shaking up the series' mediocre track record. Basic one-button combos are propped up by a clumsy dodge move and the ability to use throwing weapons. It's a formula that never changes, regardless of the character you choose. There is variation in the form of back-up characters. You choose a pair of them at the start of each stage, and call upon to perform devastating attacks when you're in need of help.

> **"A GAME THAT DOESN'T EVEN CARE THAT IT'S ON THE DS. AND NEITHER SHOULD YOU."**

Stages are split into four segments – the first two involve a stretch of scrapping, followed by a mini-boss set-piece that finally requires the stylus to be used for something worthy, such as drawing lines from your character to an opponent that's teleporting around the screen. Then it's on to yet another

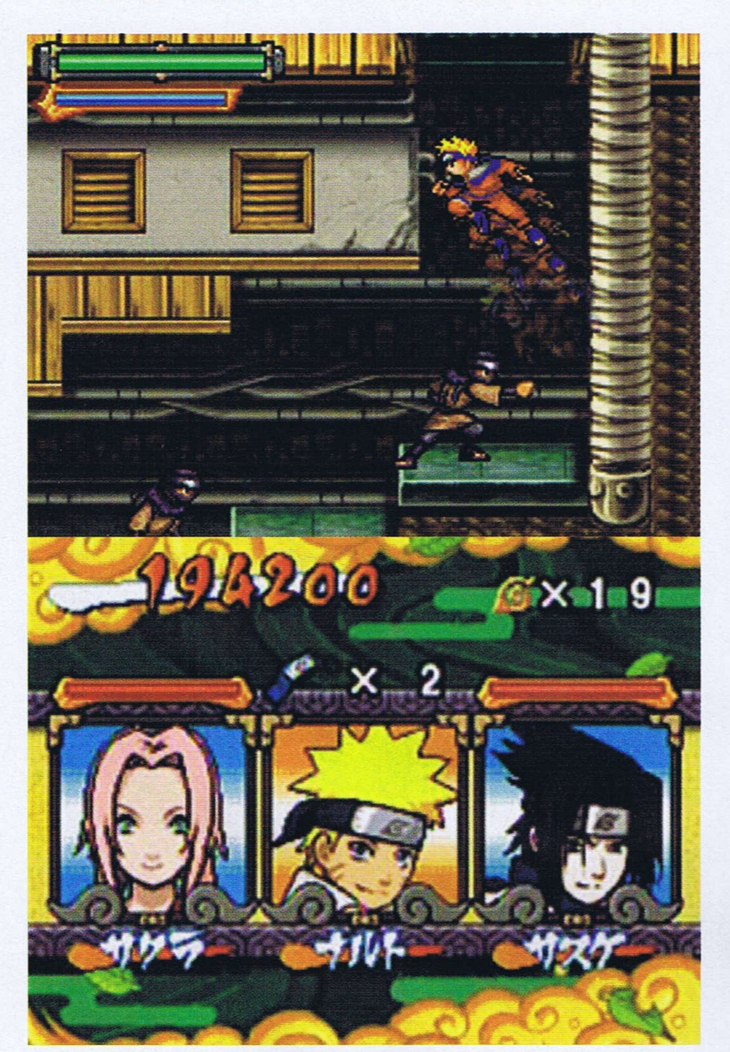




△ Is this the same console that runs *Nintendogs*? Apparently so.



△ Punch boulders to solve puzzles! They don't even squish enemies.



△ Your two partners sit on the bottom screen, waiting to be called upon.



△ A spinning fat man trapped in a stone dome? It's like some kind of Tango advert.



△ Do not adjust your magazine – this is genuinely how the game looks.



△ Naruto can, rather niftily, sprint up and down certain walls.

stretch of leaping and thumping before doing battle with another stage boss, which is always either dull or frustrating.

The environments won't be putting the GBA out of a job, and there's some harsh collision detection in place that punishes the player if they so much as think of touching an enemy with anything but an outstretched fist. And why on earth does it take three punches to kill a crow? We reckon we could do it in two, and we're not exactly superhuman combat machines.

As well as the game, there's a quirky, pointless and simple art package that allows you to doodle over a series of Naruto wallpapers. Even if the idea of defacing your favourite Naruto character by giving them a 'comedy' fez and cigar appeals, the novelty will disappear in seconds.

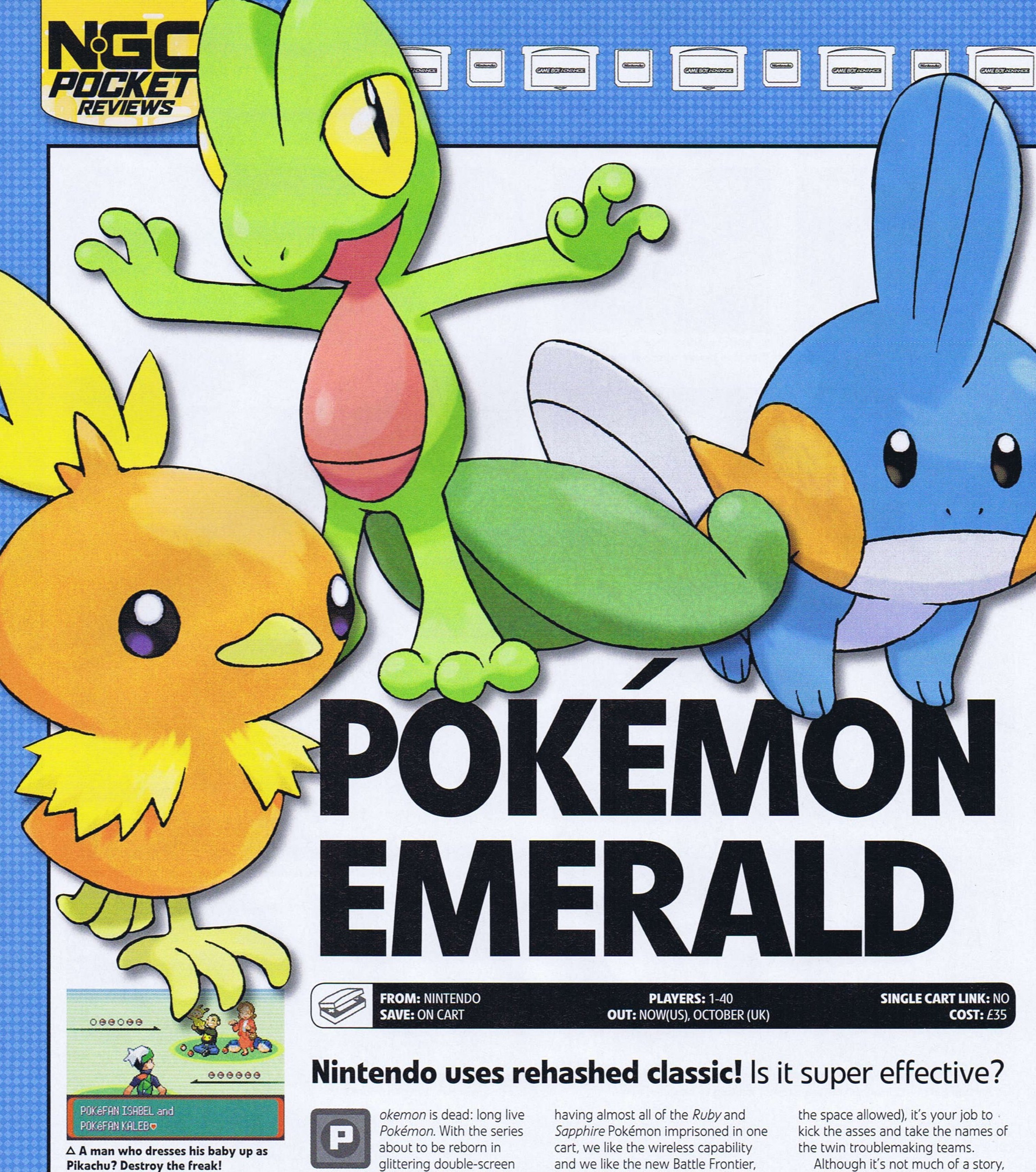
Naruto DS isn't a shambles, it doesn't quite put the ming into platforming, and the action is bearable. The trouble is that it's as bland as an iceberg. It feels about as cutting-edge as watching the Queen's speech on a VHS tape, through a monocle. How about it being 'one for the fans', that back-handed recommendation offered as grudging praise for drab licence tie-ins? Well, maybe. It's likely that you'll find it more challenging than irritating, but only if you have made up your mind to enjoy the game before even reading this review. Otherwise, get *Advance Guardian Heroes* (sure, it judders like an angry drill sergeant, but it's still pretty funky) or the incredible *Astro Boy*.

Gamecube instalments of Naruto have been decent 3D fighting games, but it seems that Tomy has trouble translating any of that to the small screen. If *Soul Calibur 2* ever went the same way as *Naruto DS* we'd need special glasses made of sponge to soak up all the tears. It feels like a lazy piece of merchandise, a game that doesn't even care that it's on the DS. And neither should you.

STEVEN BAILEY







POKÉMON EMERALD

FROM: NINTENDO
SAVE: ON CART
PLAYERS: 1-40
OUT: NOW(US), OCTOBER (UK)
SINGLE CART LINK: NO
COST: £35

Nintendo uses rehashed classic! Is it super effective?

Pokemon is dead: long live *Pokémon*. With the series about to be reborn in glittering double-screen style on the Nintendo DS, *Pokémon Emerald* sees the original form of the game take its final bow. After seven years of defiantly static, stubbornly ugly creature collection, stage one of the phenomenon ends here.

But this is an annoying way to crown seven years of catching (and clobbering) 'em all on the Game Boy. *Emerald* is simply the celebrity marriage of 2003 chart-conquerors *Ruby* and *Sapphire*. A few extra bits and bobs have been bolted on to keep Nicky Campbell from shoulder-barging through Nintendo's door on behalf of a nation full of disappointed 10-year-olds, but that's it. We like having almost all of the *Ruby* and *Sapphire* Pokémon imprisoned in one cart, we like the wireless capability and we like the new Battle Frontier, but couldn't we have had all this the first time around, rather than for another 30 notes two years later?

Emerald's plot merges *Ruby* and *Sapphire*'s storylines together. So, rather than stumbling on the plans of Team Magma or Team Aqua, you get under the feet of *both*. As either Brendan or May (or "Hasselhoff", as we vainly tried to name our hero in the space allowed), it's your job to kick the asses and take the names of the twin troublemaking teams.

> "AN ANNOYING WAY TO CROWN SEVEN YEARS OF CATCHING 'EM ALL ON THE GAME BOY"

Although it's not much of a story, truth be told. As *Ruby/ Sapphire* veterans, we were almost in tears as we waded through the syrup of what is essentially an identical rehash of the excitement-free 2003 storyline all over again, although the neat new finale did stop us sulking for a bit.

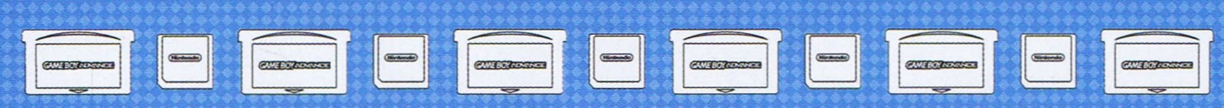
The game though, is as lethally and blissfully compelling as ever. You know you're hooked for the duration

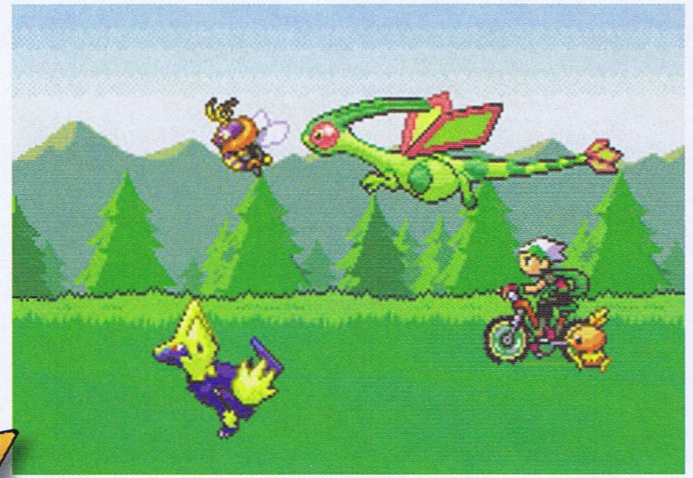
POKéFAN ISABEL and
POKéFAN KALEB

△ **A man who dresses his baby up as Pikachu? Destroy the freak!**

▸POKéMON JUMP
DODRIO BERRY-PICKING
EXIT
Which game should I describe?

△ **The Wireless Adapter (from *Fire Red/ Leaf Green*) unlocks these mini-games.**





△ This is from the intro. There are a smattering of primitive cutscenes later on, too.



△ In spite of that fancy decorative background, Shuppet lost. Bring it.



△ Exactly what's going through our head during the 173rd mid-cave Zubat battle. Yet again, you have to keep on buying potions if you don't want to get mugged every couple of steps in the long grass or dark areas. How about a simple 'no fights today' option?



△ Match Call is a good twist on *Ruby/Sapphire*'s rematch feature.

the moment you choose your starting Pokémon from Treecko, Mudkip and Torchic (again) and you're tripping over critters in the tall grass, colliding face-first with Whismurs down dark alleyways and taking on Trainers with a bad case of floating exclamation marks.

Pokémon's winning concept refuses to crumble with age, and *Emerald* is as much fun as our old friends *Red* and *Blue* were back in 1998. In fact, while we'd happily marry the recent *Leaf Green* and *Fire Red* if they'd only make it legal, the games that *Emerald* is based on really aren't that far behind them on our love-chart.

The beauty contests are a uniquely non-violent option for those who would rather not be picking bits of bloodied Pikachu off their pullover at the end of the day. Trainers and Gym Leaders are plentiful and relatively forgiving. The ability to decorate your own secret cave with dolls and posters makes us as happy as a seven-year-old in a room full of McFly. And while it still looks awful compared to, say, *Golden Sun: The Lost Age*, the 200-odd hyperactive mini-monsters scrub up pretty well.

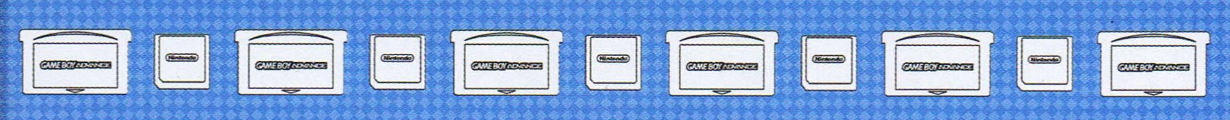
But pushing down the other side of the scales are faults and annoyances that should really have been put right by now. The kind of pace-slowing, hand-holding nonsense we can do without after seven years, thanks. Annoyances like clicking through the same "The soil returns to its loamy state" message marathon *every* time we pick a berry, or having to travel to one particular house in one particular town just to change a Pokémon's name. Shoving rocks around in caves and getting hammered by five Zubats every three paces in the process is second only to



EASY DOES IT

Pokémon Emerald, much like its parents Ruby and Sapphire, is pretty easy and is over pretty quickly. For one thing, you're given the running shoes right from the start, which cuts your traipsing time in half. Your rival and the Gym Leaders don't kick up too much of a fuss when you try to give their monsters the faints, and EXP Share – which is bagged very early on in the game – ramps up the power of your non-battling Pokémon and lets you build up a powerful team of battle-happy critters very quickly. One for the newcomers, then? Right.







NEW IN 2005

All change. Decide if Emerald's new features are worth your hand-earned notes.



'MON OVERLOAD
Barring a handful, most of the 'mon from *Ruby* and *Sapphire* are present – including Kyogre and Groudon.

DOUBLE TEAM
Prepare for trouble, make it double. You take on both Team Aqua *and* Team Magma – there's a cracking new finale, too.



THE SHAKES
As in *Pokémon Crystal*, every Pokémon does a little jig prior to each battle. We've seen better animation from a calculator.



SHADY CHARACTER
You've now got your very own stalker. Scott smarms up to you after key battles and congratulates you. Is he friend or foe?



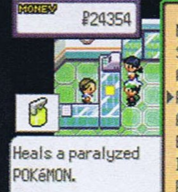
TWIN TERROR
This we like: two Trainers can gang up on you if you meet their lines of sight simultaneously. They still lose, natch.



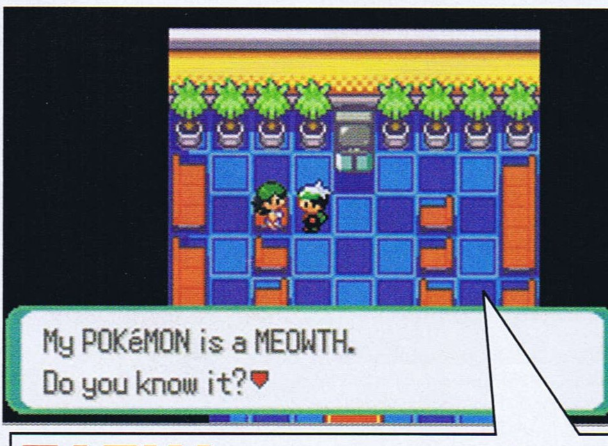
CHANGE CLOTHES
Brendan and May now sport slightly different outfits. And you were thinking most of the changes were cosmetic…



GYM GYP
The Gym Leaders have redecorated, and have tweaked their Pokéteams. The eighth gym is new. Its leader is an absolute git.



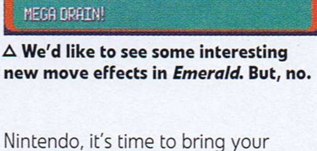
WINDOW SHOPPING
You can now actually see the items you're buying. Who knew TMs looked like discs? Or that Full Heal looks like a grenade?





△ **Despite Brendan and May's makeover, they still need a haircut.**





△ **We'd like to see some interesting new move effects in *Emerald*. But, no.**

EARLY 'MONING

As well as packing in around 200 of Nintendo's favourite pastel-coloured profit-makers from the Ruby *and* Sapphire *carts, Emerald also has a handful of National Dex monsters – the Pokémon from the original games and* Fire Red/Leaf Green *– thrown into the mix. We managed to find a lady at the Battle Frontier who wanted to swap a Skitty for our old mate Meowth, for example. Although it's still not that much of a bonus because you'll still need access to both* Fire Red *and* Leaf Green *to clap eyes on the bulk of the original Pokémon crowd.*



fingernails being run down a blackboard on our teeth-clench-o-meter.

Still, *Emerald* often glitters with new features that are hard not to like. Two-versus-two battles, which seemed a throwaway addition in *Ruby* and *Sapphire*, are now a regular occurrence – individual Trainers gang up on you, and you can even join forces with the odd GBA-controlled character for proper co-operative fights.

Speaking of which, the monsters still don't get stuck into each other during fights. They just stand there while a special effect flashes across the screen. Come on, Nintendo, it's time to bring your animal fights into the 21st century. If not blood, at least give us contact.

The phone call feature of the PokéNav – with which you can return to gyms to chalk another one up for the Littleroot Town crew – makes a welcome return from *Gold* and *Silver*, too. It all adds variety to the trudging around between towns, and makes watching your team's green EXP meters crawl upward that much more bearable.

Rounding it all off is the colossal new Battle Frontier; the evolution of *Ruby/Sapphires*'s Battle Tower. It's a giant island with seven challenge areas to take on, each culminating in a battle with the Frontier Brain (not an actual brain, sadly). Even established Pokémaniacs will struggle here, with the assorted restrictions including a ban on Legendary Pokémon – so long, Kyogre – and Pokémon refusing to follow your orders. Still, quite why unlocking Frontier requires you to smash your way through the entire game – a







BATTLE FRONTIER

Sail away to a beautiful faraway island. And get your arse handed to you.



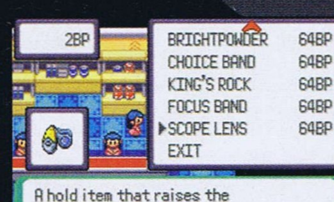
PRACTISE
Frontier is locked until the end of *Emerald*, but Battle Tents dotted around Hoenn introduce you to its battles.



POWER UP
There's a different battle theme for each of Frontier's areas. Battle Pyramid is for Pokémon that really like making hurt.



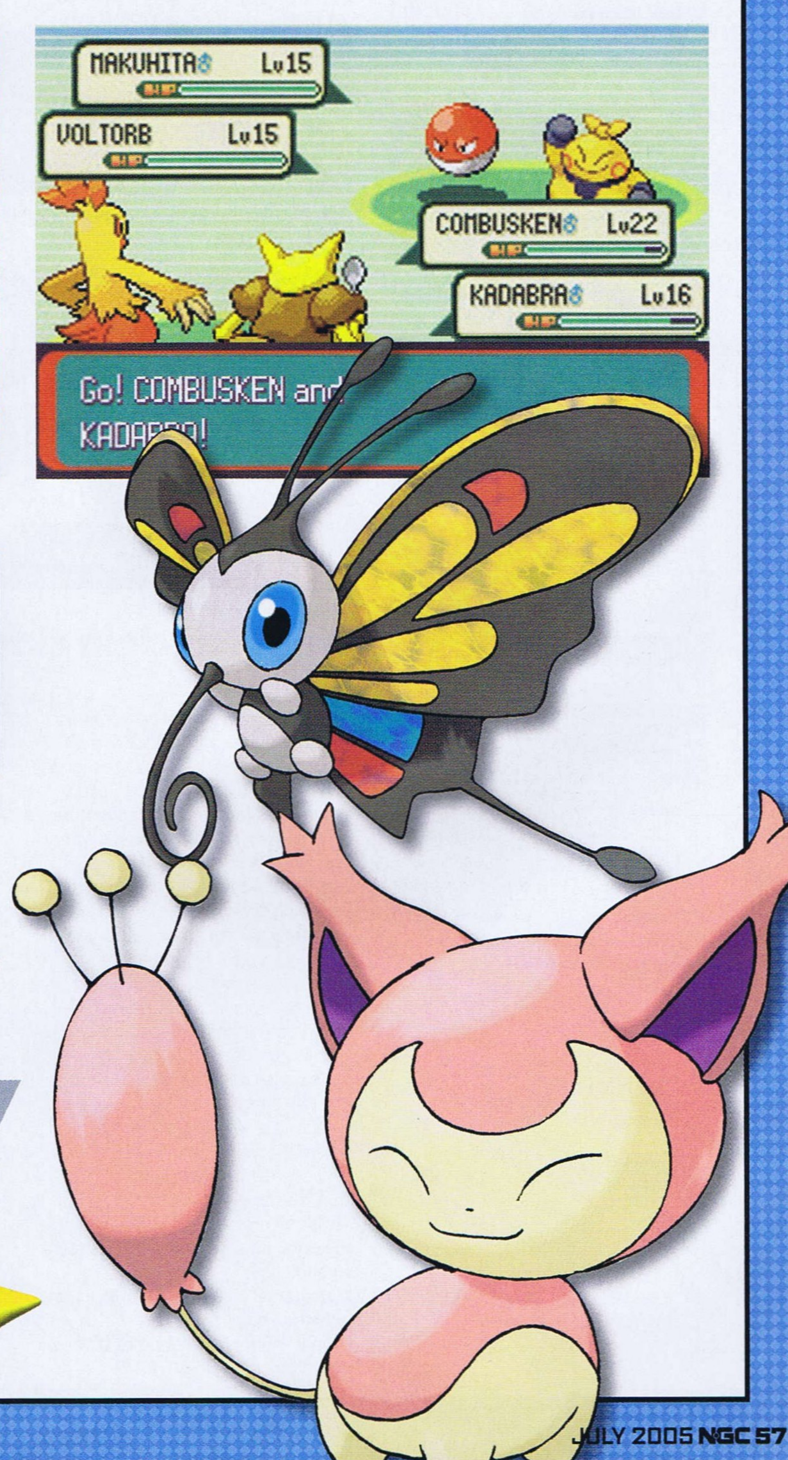
PICK 'EM
Some Frontier battles require your Pokémon to be locked away, so you can use rental monsters, a la *Colosseum*.



PRIZE PLUCK
Slog through Frontier and you'll rack up Battle Points, swappable for hold items, dolls and other goodies.



△ *Emerald* is very pretty in that understated, stubbornly 2D Pokémon way.





△ Many evolutions are still trade-only, so Abra's stuck as Kadabra for now.



△ Our tactic: stock up on Repel, dodge cave battles and cut the game in half.

game that half the world has already played – is beyond us.

So, the bottom line: *Emerald* is for you if you missed *Ruby* and *Sapphire*, or if you're attempting to build the world's tallest tower of different Pokémon games, or you just like the name. It's a superb title, splitting at the seams with great bits and, with wireless play borrowed from *Fire Red* and *Leaf Green*, it's a genuine multiplayer marvel.

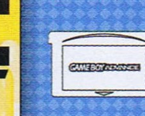
But while there's no point trying to argue that *Emerald* isn't fun in a bun (hence the score), you can probably smell our cynicism from here. Combining *Ruby* and *Sapphire* as it does, you're left asking what the point of *Ruby* and *Sapphire* was in the first place. And with so many niggling problems left over from 1998's debut carts, and so little that's actually new, there's an even bigger question that will be quite rightly forming in your mind: why don't I just wait for *Pokémon* on the DS?

MARK GREEN

"EMERALD IS FUN IN A BUN, BUT YOU CAN PROBABLY SMELL OUR CYNICISM FROM HERE"

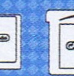
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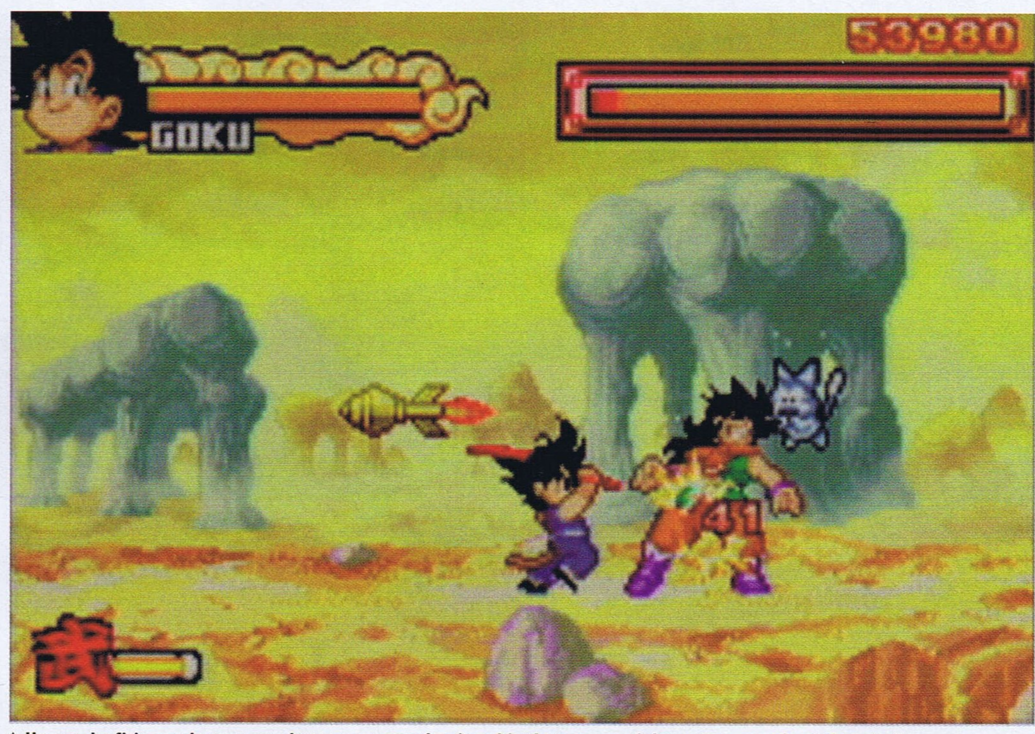








△ He may be firing rockets at you, but your energy bar is so big that you won't have to worry about that at all.

DRAGON BALL ADVANCE ADVENTURE


FROM: ATARI **PLAYERS:** 1-2 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **SAVE:** ON CART **OUT:** 17TH JUNE **COST:** £25

Travel back in time to when Goku still had a tail…


First a word of warning: notice that lack of a 'Z' in the title? That's because this is based on Goku's slightly less famous early adventures as a monkey-tailed child, back when Tenshinan was evil and Master Roshi was just a filthy old perv. You won't be seeing grown-up Goku, Vegeta or any Super Saiyan action – this game only goes up to the defeat of King Piccolo – but you do get to play as some super-obscure characters like foppish assassin Taopaipai and Goku's granddad.

If none of that made any sense, just pay attention to this bit – it's a typical side-scrolling platformer where the main gimmick is that you play as a semi-simian child who's chasing some magic balls.

It's all pretty basic stuff – walk to the right, hit stuff with Goku's super-extending pole, do the odd Kamehameha and repeat this process until the end of the level – which we have all seen plenty of times before. And although the AI isn't exactly brilliant, Bandai have somehow managed to cram a decent selection of moves onto the GBA's somewhat limited buttons.

The levels are punctuated with the odd bit of side-scrolling shooting on Goku's pet cloud, Kinto'un (it's set before Goku could fly). But these sections are even more basic, and easier than the rest of the game.

Fortunately though, things perk up when you reach the Tenkaichi Budokai fighting tournament. Here the action is overhauled as it becomes a one-on-one fighter. You have to batter your opponent until their defence bar is drained, then you can nail them with one of the flying combos featured in the series.

> **"YOU'LL BOUNCE THROUGH THE GAME IN ABOUT THREE HOURS OR SO ON YOUR FIRST ATTEMPT"**

If all this sounds a bit easy, that's because it is. Unless you're a monkey-pawed simpleton with all the attention span of an angry Vegeta, you'll bounce through the entire game in three hours or so on your very first attempt. Enemy attack patterns aren't particularly complicated and your energy bar is absolutely huge so the biggest danger is getting over-confident and accidentally leaping into one of the many instant-death pits that the designers have thoughtfully scattered throughout the levels.

The good news is that completing the game will unlock Krillin, who has a slightly different fighting style to Goku – Goku's screen-clearing Pole Spin turns into Krillin's paralysing



△ He may look big and tough, but trust us, he certainly isn't. He's easy.



△ Master Roshi, probably indulging in his notorious taste for the ladies.



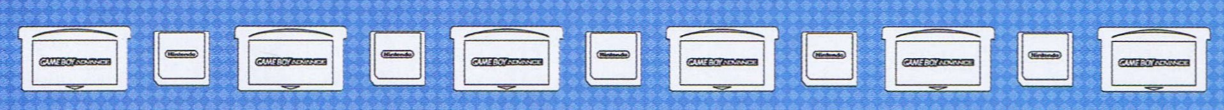
△ Notice Goku's tail, this instalment is set back when he was half monkey.



△ The bosses' patterns of attack aren't difficult to get to grips with.



△ The flying sections aren't much of a challenge, unfortunately.






△ It's what Dragon Ball fans have been waiting for. Yes, it's Bulma in a bunny suit.



△ Traps like this the toughest part of the game as they result in instant death.



△ Although the game throws a vast number of enemies at you, it still doesn't present much of a challenge.


△ The flying section is just one of three battle modes in the game.



△ The AI isn't the greatest and it all gets a little repetitive after a while.



△ Witness the awesome power of Goku's Nyoibo stick. Very handy.



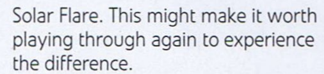
△ The Tenkaichi Budokai section is a simple one-on-one fighter. Good stuff.

Solar Flare. This might make it worth playing through again to experience the difference.

There's also a fair bit of novelty in getting to grips with the lesser Dragon Ball characters like Jackie Chun in the Tenkaichi Budokai. The brilliantly named mini-games – like Small Fry Fight and Boss Parade – spice things up a bit, but they aren't much more than variations of the missions you'll find in the main game.

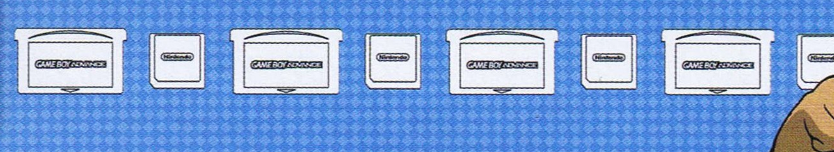
For anyone who doesn't care about the dodgy relationship between Tenshinhan and Chaozu or hasn't a clue who the Red Ribbon Army are, it's simply a bit repetitive and short-lived to appeal. Still, it's acres better than the Taiketsu games… and it's got Bulma in a bunny-suit.

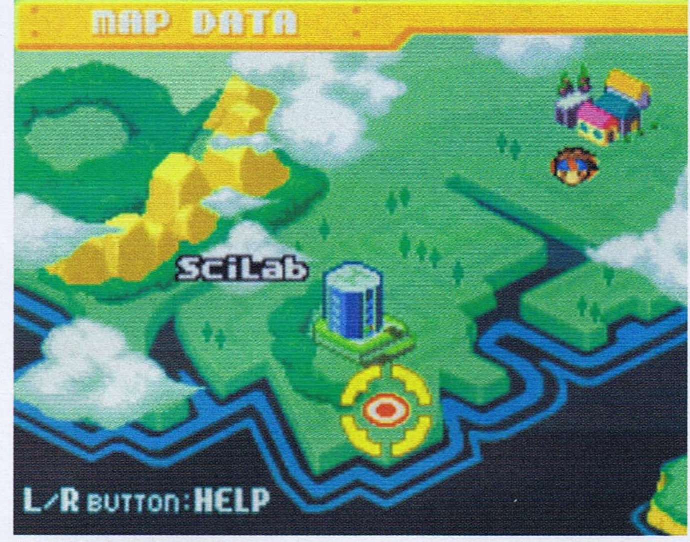
JOEL SNAPE





△ Interestingly enough, Kamehameha was actually the head of a dynasty that ruled Hawaii for centuries. What he has to do with fireballs, however…





△ This is the 'real' world, there are no digital nasties to be found here.



△ Use your chips to defeat enemies.



△ Use the laptop to enter cyberspace.



△ Cyberspace is bigger this time.

MEGA MAN BATTLE NETWORK TRANSMISSION 5

FROM: NINTENDO **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **SAVE:** ON CART **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £30

Number five in the long-running series proves not much different from the other four; but then, we don't really care…



Long-time readers will know that we've always had something of a soft spot for Mega Man's Network games. So much so that we were bitterly disappointed by the crushingly awful *Battle Chip Challenge*, so it's nice to see *MMBNT5* return to its real-time battle roots.

It plays very much like a simplified RPG. You control the main character, called Lan, in a 'real' overworld, where mission objectives and plot developments are handed out, and you have a cyberspace-style world, which essentially plays the part of the dungeons.

These areas are navigated by Mega Man himself, who assumes the role of Lan's Navi, a digital avatar that roams the net, dishing out justice to viruses, bosses and other assorted nasties on Lan's behalf. This digital world can be accessed by jacking in to various electrical devices that are dotted around the 'real' world.

This time the game world is a touch larger, which is the only major difference this time, but crucially, the excellent battle system has remained.

Mega Man has a number of Battle Chips, which can be collected and sorted into a deck between battles. Each chip represents a weapon, recovery item, support item (such as extra attack power) and so forth. These can then be used at intervals in the battles to complement Mega Man's ever-familiar charge cannon. These battles take place on a grid divided into your territory and the enemies', and you move around it in real-time, attacking the viruses on the other side.

> "IT REMAINS A CONSISTENTLY ENJOYABLE EXPERIENCE"

Despite being very familiar to us now, we still consider it to be a very engaging system which has just the right mix of action and tactics to stave off boredom through the numerous random encounters.

True, it's not the kind of game that we'd expect everyone to rush out and buy. We'd be lying if we said we wouldn't have liked a few new features to get our teeth into, but we maintain our stance that, in the face of some of truly awful GBA games doing the rounds, the Network Transmission games remain a consistently enjoyable experience. If you've never had the pleasure before, then you could do a lot worse than give this a go.

GERAINT EVANS

3

NGC POCKET

TIPS • TIPS • TIPS

All the latest and greatest DS and GBA cheats, tips and secrets...

TIP OF THE MONTH

PAC-PIX

If you go into Gallery mode in *Pac-Pix* you can draw some funny stuff. Some of them are hard to draw, but the results are worth it. And we haven't heard a better line this month than when Geraint said "I'm trying to draw a teardrop, but I keep drawing a turd."



ARROW
Draw an arrow and it will shoot up and hit Pac-Man. But be warned – this only works once you have beaten chapter four.

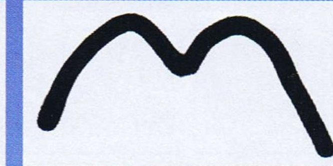


TREBLE CLEF
Draw a treble clef (for those less musically inclined, it's that weird bendy thing above). It will turn red and a musical chime will sound.

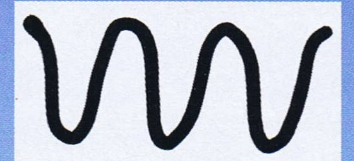
TURD
Draw your crap a bit like a six, only start at the top. Sometimes the game will think you've tried to draw a Pac-Man, though.



CLOUD
Draw a cloud and it will turn into a blue raincloud. It will then start to rain as the cloud slowly floats off the screen.



FART
Draw an arse. No, really. It has to be a weird shape, though. Draw it like a 3, M or W, and it will let out a comedy guff.

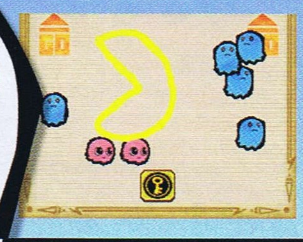


SNAKE
Draw a wavy horizontal line from left to right (these need to be drawn quite high), then sit back and watch your line turn green and slither off the screen.



BUTTERFLY
Draw a butterfly (draw it like a figure of eight, but start in the middle) and it will fly away. It even flutters all the way up to the top screen.





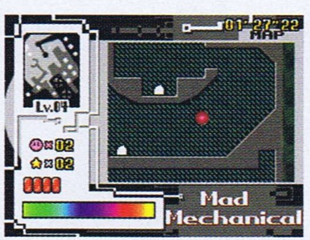


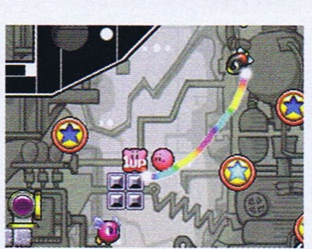
△ When your paint bar is full, draw some loops to make Kirby speed along. Watch out though – your paint meter runs down quickly when you're in the air.

KIRBY CANVAS CURSE

Unlock secret fifth character
Put a copy of *Kirby's Nightmare in Dreamland* in the GBA slot, then complete the final level of *Canvas Curse*.

Unlock Waddle Dee
Complete the game. Waddle Dee is just like Kirby, but he has four lives and is a touch lighter. However, unlike Kirby, he can't absorb enemies' powers.





△ You know you can't wait to unlock Waddle Dee and Waddle Doo.

Unlock King Dee Dee
Once you've got Waddle Dee, you can buy King Dee Dee for 20 medals. He is stronger than Kirby and will sink when he hits water. As well as this, he isn't affected by wind, has seven lives and when you touch him, he'll swing his hammer.

Unlock Metaknight
Once you've bought King Dee Dee, you can purchase Metaknight for 25 medals. He is twice as fast as Kirby, but he only has three lives and can't acquire any special powers from enemies.

Unlock Waddle Doo
Complete the game with all four characters to unlock Waddle Doo. He has five lives and fires a beam. Also, when you touch him, the beam will spin around him.

YOSHI'S TOUCH & GO

Unlock Balloon mini-game
Get the highest score on each of the single-player modes, then tap the balloons on the main menu screen to get the mini-game.

Unlock Challenge mode
Survive for longer than 3000 metres on Endless mode.

Unlock Time Attack mode
Get a score of more than 300 on Score Attack mode.

Unlock Black Yoshi (holds 50 eggs)
Get 160 points on the Baby Mario level.

Unlock Blue Yoshi (holds 35 eggs)
Get 100 points on the Baby Mario level.

SEND US YOUR SECRETS

Discovered a new, funny shape in *Pac-Pix*'s gallery mode? Found a new secret in *Mario 64 DS*? Have you found any cool secrets or smart tricks in any of your DS or GBA games? If so, we want to hear from you. Send us your secrets and we'll print the top ten every month, and the best entry will win a game. But be warned; if we catch you cutting and pasting cheat codes from the internet, we'll get rather cross. Post your entries to Pocket Tips, **NGC**, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW. Or email your entries to **NGC**@futurenet.co.uk (title the email Pocket Tips).





Universal Gravitation is pretty. Pretty simple. Oh, and pretty ugly.

YOSHI'S UNIVERSAL GRAVITATION



Unlock Challenge mode
Beat Bowser for the second time in Story mode to unlock Challenge mode and Challenge 1.

Unlock Challenges 2, 3, and 4
Eat all of the cherries in Story mode's Egg Gallery section.

Unlock Final Challenge
Get every gold medal in Story mode.





You can fire eggs up to the top screen to take out enemies.

Unlock Bronze Yoshi (holds 60 eggs)
Survive for 10,000 metres on Endless mode.

Unlock Pink Yoshi (holds 30 eggs)
Get 80 points on the Baby Mario level.

Unlock Purple Yoshi (holds 50 eggs)
Get 0 points on Challenge mode.

Unlock Red Yoshi (holds 45 eggs)
Get 140 points on the Baby Mario level.

Unlock Sky Blue Yoshi (holds 25 eggs)
Get 60 points on the Baby Mario level.

Unlock Light Blue Yoshi (Unlimited eggs)
Get 0 points on Time Attack mode.

Unlock Yellow Yoshi (holds 40 eggs)
Get 120 points on the Baby Mario level.

Tickle Baby Mario
At the end of the Baby Mario level, you can tickle him with your stylus when he falls onto the bottom screen.

Extra coins
When Baby Mario is falling, you can touch the trees and coins will fall out.



Depending on how many points you managed to get in the Baby Mario level, Yoshi will be a different colour. If you did well, he'll get more bum eggs.



***Meteos* is so much fun and so addictive, we can guarantee you'll unlock Planet Florias. The five hours it takes to get the new planet will just fly by.**

METEOS

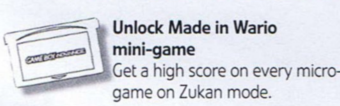


Unlock Planet Florias
Play *Meteos* for more than five hours.

Unlock Planet Grannest
Complete Star Trip Straight mode once.

Unlock Planet Meteos
Play Star Trip and watch any of the eight possible endings

WARIO WARE TWISTED!



Unlock Made in Wario mini-game
Get a high score on every micro-game on Zukan mode.

Unlock Tower mini-game
Complete Warioman.

Unlock Hard Tower
Get 25 points on the easy Tower.

Unlock Thrilling Tower
Get 25 points on the hard Tower.

Unlock Alien (Staff Credits) Item
Complete Wario's final stage.

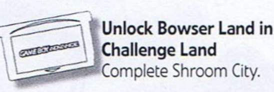
Unlock Pyoro R
Complete every micro-game once.

Unlock Random item
Complete any character's stage.



The bonus items are great. You should try to unlock 'em all.

MARIO PARTY ADVANCE



Unlock Bowser Land in Challenge Land
Complete Shroom City.

Unlock Koopa Kid Battle
Complete Shroom City.

Unlock Game Room in Challenge mode
Play the 1-coin mini-game in Shroom City.



Working your way through Shroom City will get pretty tiresome.

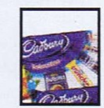


We fill our pockets with the latest GBA and DS peripherals so you don't have to empty yours on the wrong kit.

DS EXTRAS PACK

4 GAMERS • £20 • WWW.4GAMERS.NET
More of a hamper than a peripheral, 4 Gamer's Extras Pack is a grab bag of bits and bobs that are far from essential but still quite useful. The foam case features a harness to lock your DS into place in order to make it slightly more awkward to use, while the screen protector films, like all others, are fine provided you can apply them in a dust/hair-free environment. The emergency battery, car adaptor and cartridge case do their jobs well, though.

MUCH THE SAME AS...



A SELECTION BOX
FROM: MUM, DAD, GRAN ETC • FREE
As with all festive confectionery compilations, in between the Mars bars and Flakes there's always something that'll go straight in the bin, or to the dog – a Caramac, say, or a Dime Bar.

N·GC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING BEST BUY

4gamers

Peel Off Protective Film MADE IN CHINA



WHAT IS A BEST BUY?

Every month we'll pick out one piece of kit that stands out from the rest and award it our coveted Best Buy badge. A Best Buy will combine superb quality with fantastic value for money.

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING BEST BUY

TRAVEL PACK

LOGIC 3 ● £20 ● WWW.SPECTRAVIDEO.COM

While it looks like the result of a fight between a pencil case and a set of fishnet stockings, this pack is decent, but not really up there with the best bundles available. It all feels a little bit bulky, but it does have everything you'd expect – including a set of crap earphones – and something that you wouldn't in the form of a USB charger. The contents are comprehensive enough, but it's all a bit messy.

MUCH THE SAME AS...

TECH PACK
FROM: JOYTECH ● £15

A slimmer and cheaper option, Joytech's Tech Pack doesn't have the USB charger, but it has everything else going for it, including our Best Buy award from last month.

DS/GBA SOLAR CHARGER

LOGIC 3 ● £25 ● WWW.SPECTRAVIDEO.COM

Finally, the appliance of science... Provided you don't live in a giant shoe, the Solar Charger works well to replenish both the GBA and DS. It'll bring a dead GBA back to life as you play, but it doesn't quite produce enough juice to keep a spent DS ticking over if you want to get right back into a game.

MUCH THE SAME AS...

BOKTAI
FROM: KONAMI ● £30

A GBA game that requires players to soak up sunshine in order to defeat vampires. It actually does more to improve the nation's intake of vitamin D than any of Jamie Oliver's school dinners.



PICTO ANIMATIONS

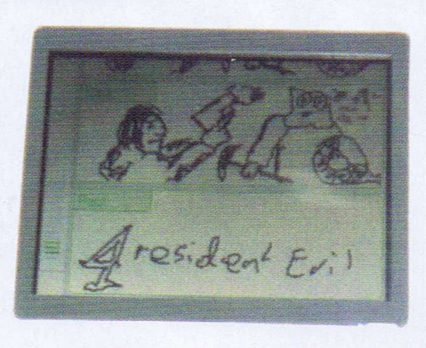
Your finest works immortalised on these here pages…



While some DS owners lounge about, picking bits of Mars Bar from their teeth and scrubbing their way to a cheap victory in *Meteos*, a more refined breed of stylus-user is evolving – the *Pictochat* Artist. These brave folks have taken up the challenge of pushing society forwards through the act of, er, drawing things in a tiny window. Videogame characters mostly, as this month's selection proves. How about something a little different in future? Self-portraits, maybe? Non-virtual celebrities? An animation of Jordan's inflated breasts carrying her off into space? Let those imaginations run riot…

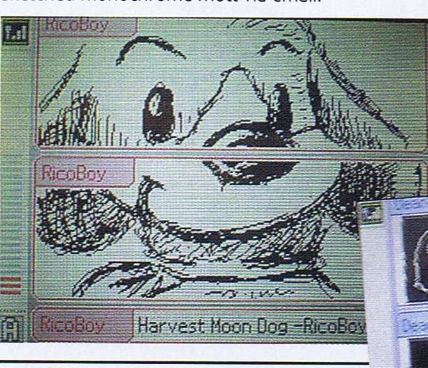
SURVIVAL HORRIBLE

Paul Hoey has captured the essence of the inside of Shinji Mikami's brain – although an image of this 'quality' is unlikely to come on two separate discs. Bonus points for getting the '4' in the right place, though. Now that's attention to detail.



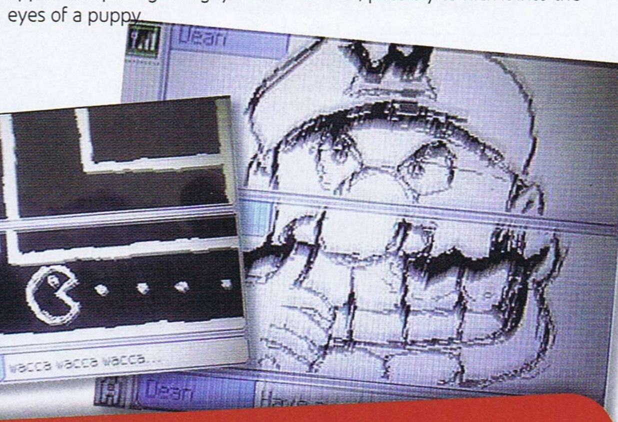
DOG HOUSE

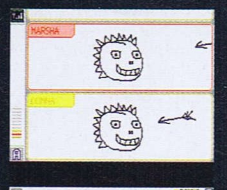
Holding your breath for the DS instalment of Harvest Moon? Well, unclench and be soothed by this excellent sketch, even if there is a slight hint of Disney's Pluto about him. Who's a good boy, then? Why, it's Nick House, who sent us this intricately sketched monochrome mutt via email.



CHARACTER CHEWER

Thanks to Dean Pesani of Wokingham for this lovely negative-style sketch of Pac-Man. But less thanks for the wobbly Wario pic, what with his disturbingly large mouth, his gargantuan chompers and the fact that he appears to pulling a bogey out of his nose, possibly to flick it into the eyes of a puppy.







HOW TO DO IT…

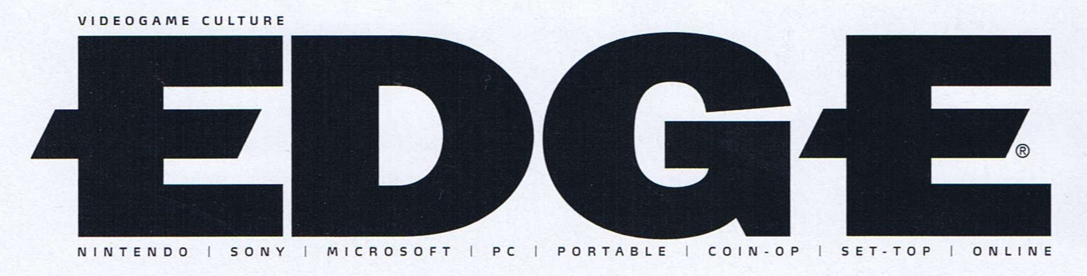
1. *Draw a little picture of something and then click on Send.*
2. *Now copy that picture back into your drawing board and make a little change to it before sending it again.*
3. *Now copy that picture onto your drawing board again, and edit it for the third frame in the animation. Keep sending and copying your picture back and forth, making all your little changes along the way.*
4. *The amount of space you have left in the message log is shown by the meter to the left-hand side. Keep an eye on it.*
5. *Once you've finished the final frame of your animation, press the up arrow to flick back through the message log until you reach the top.*
6. *Now hold down the left shoulder button and then half a second later hold down the right shoulder button.*

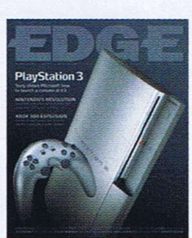
N·GC POCKET

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

We want your Pictochat artwork

Have you done something amazingly creative with your DS and *Pictochat*? If you've made pictures, animations or anything else you'd like to share with the world, we'd love to see it. As you can't save your pictures on the DS, this is what we'd like you to do: when you've finished with your Picto art, turn the lights off, take a photo with a digital camera and send it as an email (titled Pictoart) to **ngc@futurenet.co.uk**. If you haven't got access to a digital camera, just send a normal photograph to: Pictoart, NGC Magazine 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.





IN ISSUE 151:

THE NEXT GENERATION

ON SALE JUNE 10

OUR PROMISE

Our reviewers are the most talented and knowledgeable Nintendo fans in the business. We don't only play games at work – we play them at home too, just like you. We ensure that we've played games through to the end so that we can give you a proper verdict – and one that saves you from wasting money.

NGC THE VERDICT YOU DESERVE! REVIEWS

DONKEY KONGA 2

Three *Donkey Konga* reviews in as many months? Some might say we were… wait for it… *scraping the barrel*… anyone? No?

P68

FIRE EMBLEM

With *Souen no Kiseki* being the subtitle. Not that anyone cares apart from Geraint and his number-obsessed friends. A four page review of this beauty over on…

P72

OUR SCORING SYSTEM

0-24 Crushingly awful, massively dull. Rest assured this game is absolute crud.

25-49 A disappointing title, stashed with nasty faults and likely to be short on any quality.

50-74 Some great bits, some not-so great bits. Decent but definitely problems.

75-89 Great fun, brilliantly programmed at times, but probably flawed.

90+ Rarely awarded, a 90+ is essential. Buy with confidence.

NGC STAR GAME

MEET THE NGC TEAM

We know about the big stuff – so what about the little games?



TOM E
Hello Kitty Roller Rescue. *Kitty told me to say that otherwise she would have "smashed my face in." Such cruelty.*



MARTIN
Spartan: Total Warrior: *"You can't knock beating the living bejesus out of hundreds of Italians with a foot of raw steel."*



PAUL
"It's got to be Snowboard Kids on DS*," says Paul. Why? "Because, dude, boards are like… so… like, duuuuuuuuude!" I see.*



GERAINT
*"*Trauma Center. *It reminds me of weekends spent picking pieces of broken glass out of my face after a night out in Swansea".*



TOM S
"King Kong. There's nothing better than the smell of a gigantic, sweaty beast leering… Sorry, am I thinking out loud again?"



GREENER
"Since moving to Budapest, I've rediscovered the joys of animals fighting for sport – not to mention the extra cash it earns me".

"Quickly, get the camera – he's doing his game face again!"

Δ Battle mode features special notes that mess things up for your opponent and award loads of bonus points.



Δ Something to do with clams in the background, but there's no time to stare at the 'pretty' graphics.



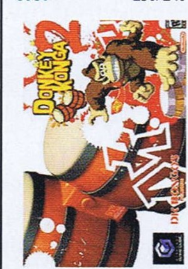
Δ You have to get the progress bar past the green marker to successfully complete the song.



Δ Watch assorted Rare characters pop up on the screen as you batter the bongos.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	NAMCO
RELEASE DATE	NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	9
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£30/£40



DONKEY KONGA 2

Get funky with the monkey – round two...



Δ Two players can share one set of bongos, with the drumming track separated from the clapping part. Not very good, really.



No matter how hard you try, you can never, ever look truly cool while playing a videogame. Any game, any console. Luckily anyone else in the room is most likely to be watching what's happening on the TV while you're squirming in your seat and wrestling with the joypad, but you can imagine how embarrassing it would be if you suddenly became the centre of attention.

In your mind, you'd be heroically protecting the president's daughter from hordes of pitchfork-wielding lunatics. In reality, your mum would be laughing at the way your tongue pokes out during the difficult bits and your mouth hangs open when you lose a life. "Quickly, get the camera – he's doing his game face again!"

> **"IN DONKEY KONGA, IT'S ACTUALLY MORE FUN TO WATCH THE PLAYERS"**

In *Donkey Konga*, it's actually much more interesting to watch the players than the on-screen

DONKEY KONGA 2

Our two favourite things in one game: bongos and monkeys

MONKEY MAGIC

Stuff you'll find in the game, but nowhere else in this review. It's excitement time, you lucky people!

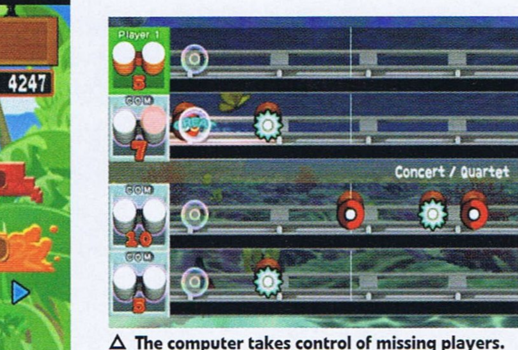


■ If this isn't the ugliest menu in all of videogamedom, you can call us a bunch of baboons and slap our purple arses.

■ Extra players can use D-pads if you only have one set of bongos, but the game is a bit rubbish if you do that.



■ How can any game have a mode as futile as this one, yet still score so highly? Ask our mums and sisters.



△ The computer takes control of missing players.



△ Solo mode is great for racking up the cash.



△ The mysterious POW blocks in the tense battle mode.

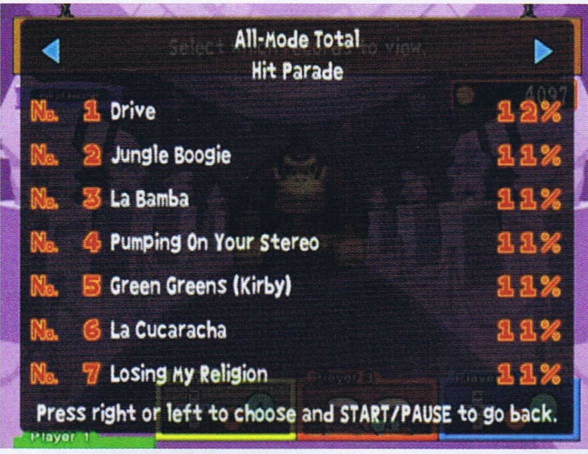
action. Consequently, if you've ever been a little self-conscious about making a fool of yourself in front of an audience, this game will make you feel only marginally less embarrassed than if you accidentally caught your dad practising primal scream therapy with his golf buddies.

Which is why, for the sake of your self esteem, you shouldn't even consider buying *Donkey Konga 2* if you're only likely to play its solo mode – in a room filled with mocking friends and camcorder-toting uncles. You'll never live it down. One day your own grandchildren will hear about it and be ashamed.

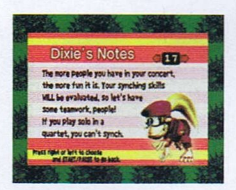
But plug in an additional three sets of bongos, distribute them among your sceptical spectators, and you might as well wave goodbye to your Gamecube for a few hours. The only thing that can put a stop to the four-way frenzy of drum-slapping noise is when somebody has to take a pain break to plunge his hands into iced water. You can actually tell exactly how long you've been playing *Donkey Konga* by counting the number of throbs per second from your reddened palms.

Clapping really hurts after a while. The drum tops are soft and padded, so you could probably thump them for half a day – a whole day if you use the backs of your hands too – before you'd need to consider how you

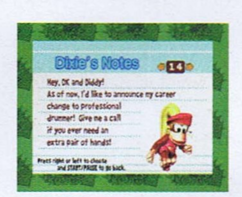
"Like Dance Dance Revolution on hot coals"



△ **One of the few statistics the game keeps track of. We've included it here because almost every other screenshot looks the same. Variety, folks.**









DRUM LUCK

An extra tenner will get you the deluxe edition, complete with bongos – perfect if you don't have a full set. We'd advise against getting the cheaper one to see if you like the game. There's no point to Donkey Konga without the bongos.



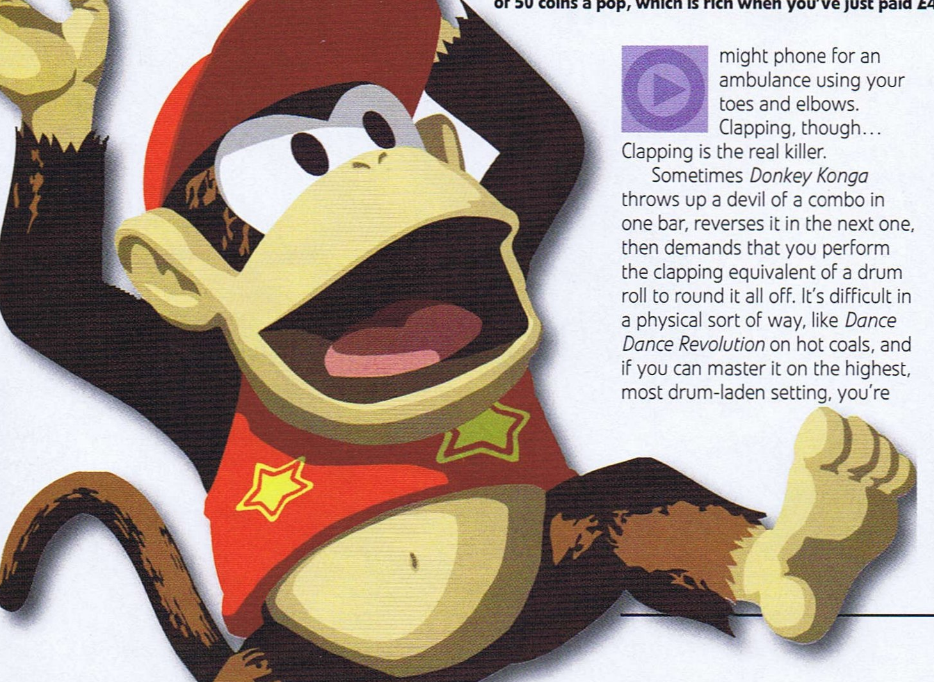
△ **We'll be spending those coins on the mini-games. They cost upwards of 50 coins a pop, which is rich when you've just paid £40 for the game.**



△ **The game that calls us a bunch of Lords.**



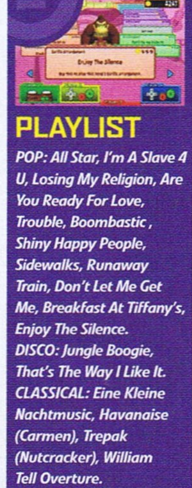
△ **Twelve in a row, for the leather-palmed.**



might phone for an ambulance using your toes and elbows. Clapping, though… Clapping is the real killer.

Sometimes *Donkey Konga* throws up a devil of a combo in one bar, reverses it in the next one, then demands that you perform the clapping equivalent of a drum roll to round it all off. It's difficult in a physical sort of way, like *Dance Dance Revolution* on hot coals, and if you can master it on the highest, most drum-laden setting, you're probably the kind of person who wishes that *Ikaruga* wasn't so easy.

For this second instalment they've fixed the bug that meant you could score a hit every time by pressing both bongos together, so there's no refuge for the cheaty player. Of course that's not to say it ever gets so stupidly tough that you'll have trouble finding any multiplayer competition. If you play it anything like we do, the whole point of a *Donkey Konga* session is musical fun rather than high scores. Somebody always gets declared the winner after each round, but it's far more satisfying to play for the simple pleasure of blasting through a four-way arrangement of a favourite track without anyone missing a beat. When you can manage that, it



PLAYLIST

***POP:** All Star, I'm A Slave 4 U, Losing My Religion, Are You Ready For Love, Trouble, Boombastic, Shiny Happy People, Sidewalks, Runaway Train, Don't Let Me Get Me, Breakfast At Tiffany's, Enjoy The Silence. **DISCO:** Jungle Boogie, That's The Way I Like It. **CLASSICAL:** Eine Kleine Nachtmusic, Havanaise (Carmen), Trepak (Nutcracker), William Tell Overture.*

DRUM AND DRUMMER
A couple of new ways to amuse yourself with bongos.

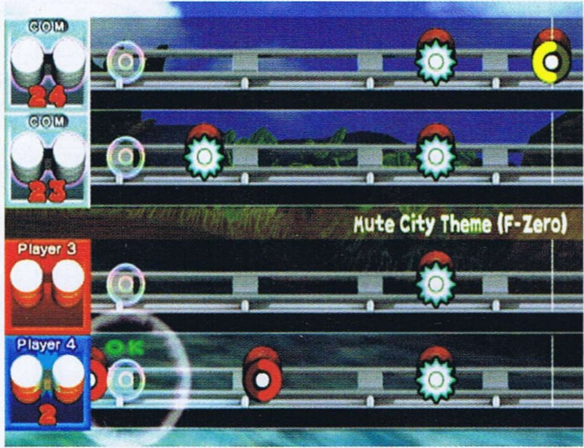


For Donkey Kong, a right-clap-right-clap sequence will clear his pile of 'blocks' in this excellent mini-game. Unfortunately the dumb ape missed the first note, and has to wait a second or so before he can have another crack at it. Meanwhile, Dixie Kong plods on at a steady pace.

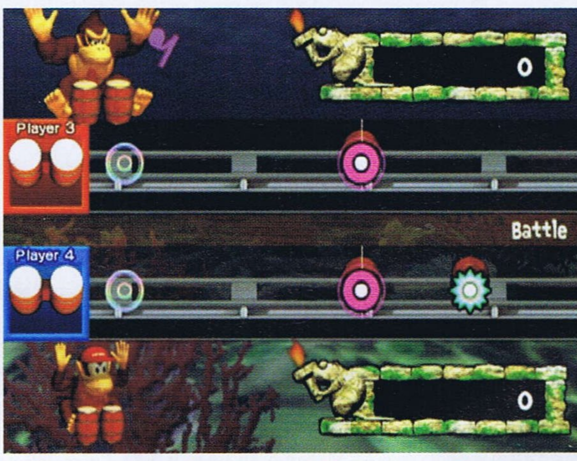

Donkey Kong misses another easy note, putting himself 11 points behind Dixie. The fool.



Brilliant, but seriously, incredibly difficult. Maybe we've just got no sense of rhythm.



Δ Four-way clap coming up – make sure your pets are locked outdoors.



Δ Playing against another person is a little too stressful for us.

sounds *amazing*, and the last thing you'll be concerned about is who got the best ranking at the end.

Basically we love pretty much everything about *Donkey Konga* and its assorted regional sequels. It's brilliant that Nintendo and Namco brought this game to market, and even better that they keep supporting the bongo peripheral with modestly priced updates. If you don't buy every single one of them, you might as well visit Shigsy's house and wee through his letterbox. That's how disrespectful you are.

For the purpose of providing a balanced review, though, there are a few little things we're not entirely happy with. The fact that the songs are all cover versions is something we can live with, as it's hard to tell the difference when you've got people clapping and thumping all over the room. But what we don't like is the way they fade out after a couple of minutes – probably so the kids playing today still have a fully working pair of hands by the time they're old and wrinkly, but as soon as a song finishes we tend to put another one on right away. Sorry, Nintendo, but your nanny tactics won't work on us.

Also, the minigames are great but why are there only two of them? Come on guys, give us some bongo-powered monkey olympics to mess about with…

Lastly, the front end is a complete mess. Granted, this game isn't about looks, but the menus are horrible to navigate and the Japanese fonts have been replaced by English ones that don't even fit the allotted space. It offends our eyes. Anyway, the review is now done. Who's for a spot of bongo action, then?

MARTIN KITTS

PLAYLIST CONTINUED
***GAME:** Green Greens (Kirby), Super Mario Bros 3 Theme, Donkey Konga 2 Theme, Pokémon Main Theme, Mute City Theme (F-Zero).*
***LATIN:** La Bamba, Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood, La Cucaracha.*
***DANCE:** Contact.*
***ROCK:** Drive, Predictable, I Don't Want To Know, Mansize Rooster, Pumping On Your Stereo, I Just Wanna Live.*

> **"WE LOVE PRETTY MUCH EVERYTHING ABOUT DONKEY KONGA"**


- It's fun for all the family.
- Two bonus games.
- Varied tunes


- Presentation is a bit rough.
- Needs more bonus games.


IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Donkey Konga 3
Nintendo
NGC/107 80%
Fifty extremely Japanese tunes to complete your collection.



5 VISUALS
Sparse menus aren't up to Nintendo's usual standard.


8 SOUNDS
A storming collection of cover versions and game themes.

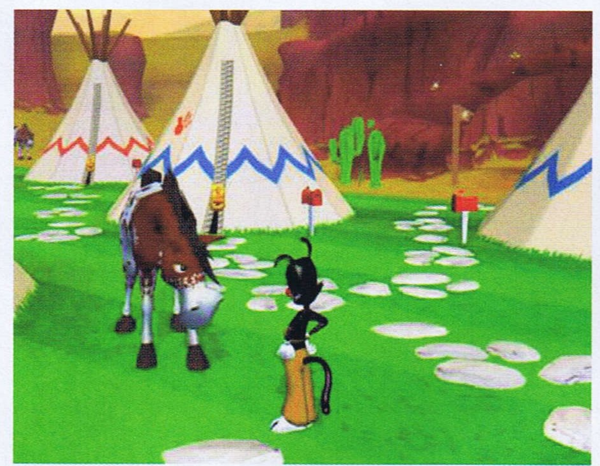

5 MASTERY
Why aren't there 20 simple bonus games in here?

8 LIFESPAN
Fun, challenging, and perhaps the best party game ever.

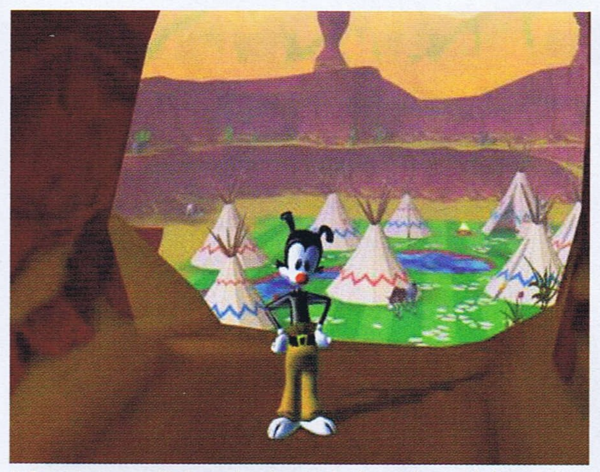
VERDICT
Missed the last one? Slap yourself in the face and apologise to Mr Shigsy. Then go out and buy this to make amends.



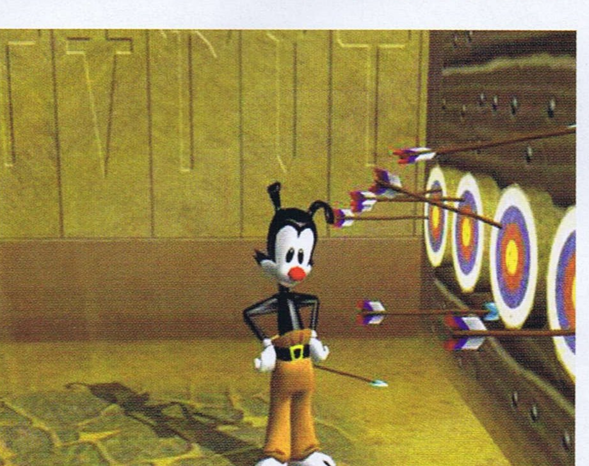
"The characters are full of life, and, er, character"



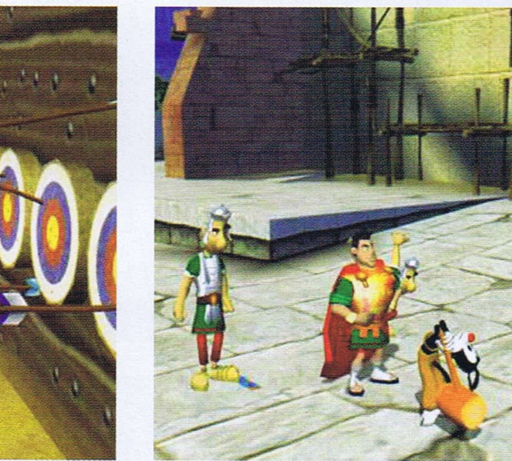
△ The levels are full of characters that you can interact with. And hit.



△ Say what you will about the visuals, the draw distance is impressive.



△ This is Yakko, the sensible one. Well, compared to the rest anyway.



△ Yakko's hammer can break through almost anything, even people.

ANIMANIACS THE GREAT EDGAR HUNT

Harmless cartoon fun… with hammers.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	IGNITION
DEVELOPER	WARTHOG
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	23
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£20



For the uninitiated, Animaniacs is a cartoon featuring three, er, things who live inside the famed water tower on the Warner Brothers movie lot. There's Yakko, the sensible one, Wakko, the mental one (he doesn't wear any pants) and Dot, the loud, squealing girly one. Together they… well, they don't do anything in particular. The show is frequently confusing, unpredictable and off-the-wall, and the game is no different from that.

Your goal is to gather Edgar Awards (a parody of the Oscars, if you hadn't already guessed), which are strewn across six movie-themed levels. Each level is a parody of a famous movie, so to name a few there's Fairytale Land (spoofing various Disney films), Wild West Land, a haunted house and an Indiana Jones-style level. So it's hardly original stuff, then, but the bright, colourful visuals do help to lend *Animaniacs* a certain charm. Also, with the help of the all the original voice actors from the show, the characters are full of life and, er, character.

Unfortunately for *Animaniacs*, probably the most important thing to consider when reviewing a platform game is the collision detection. If you're falling through walls or merging into things, there's very little point in carrying on with the game. The nature of the genre demands solid level design, and herein lies *Animaniacs'* problem. The levels are pleasant to look at and are packed with things to do and see, but controlling the characters feels strangely cumbersome and as a result the whole game suffers. Occasionally you'll stutter at the edge of a precipice or topple awkwardly into a group of enemies through no fault of your own, which is completely unforgivable.

In its favour, things are kept interesting with the ability to switch characters at will. They each have their own skills and items that you'll need to call up when certain problems arise. Again, originality isn't the game's forte, but at least it makes an effort. It's only £20, however, so it makes for a decent enough distraction for fans and people with nothing better to spend their money on.

ANDREW KELLY



■ Simple, bouncy platforming.
■ All the characters from the show.



■ Awful collision detection and bugs.
■ If you don't like Animaniacs, avoid.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Super Mario Sunshine
Nintendo
NGC/73, 96%
Blissfully summery classic platformer. The only game with a talking water cannon.

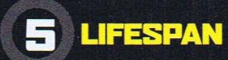




6 VISUALS
It all looks very colourful and stylish, if a little blocky.



6 SOUNDS
Features music and voices direct from the original TV show.



6 MASTERY
Performs well enough, but the framerate suffers.

5 LIFESPAN
With only six levels, it doesn't take very long to finish.

VERDICT

A competent platformer marred by blocky visuals, a buggy game engine and overly simplistic gameplay.



55


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△ You're always outnumbered, so you have to use the available terrain to your advantage.



△ Make sure you visit any buildings you find for some extra advice and hopefully some items.



△ This axe-wielding fella isn't the strongest to start with, but nurture him well and he'll prove very useful indeed.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS
RELEASE DATE	NOW (JAP)
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	8
GBA LINK-UP	YES
COST	¥6,800 (£35)

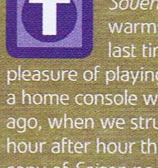


FIRE EMBLEM SOUEN NO KISEKI

Turn-based strategy at its very best…



△ Cover is either total or zero. Only boxes, walls and trucks can be hidden behind and then the enemy can still see you.



There's something about *Souen no Kiseki* that warms our hearts. The last time we had the pleasure of playing Fire Emblem on a home console was over a decade ago, when we struggled hopelessly, hour after hour through an import copy of *Seisen no Keifu* on the SNES. No, we didn't know what was going on story-wise, but there was just something about it. The faultless strategy beating away at its heart really engaged us.

Fast forward 11 years and here we are ploughing through the Japanese version of the latest instalment, and once again we find ourselves ridiculously excited by it. The opening credits and cutscenes are partly responsible; they're quite simply breathtaking. Nintendo rarely do FMV, which is a shame because these really are fantastic. They have an amazing amount of detail and are beautifully animated, with very subtle cel-shading. Just enough to take the edge off the artificial glossiness that so often ruins sequences like these, giving it a hand-drawn look all of its own. A good start then, though sadly this level of presentation isn't as consistent as we would have liked. In fact it's downright patchy.

The in-game animation seems far more wooden than its 2D counterparts. Take Lyn in *Fire Emblem* on GBA, for comparison's sake. When she unsheathes her sword and pauses, ready for a critical hit, you see the effort in the



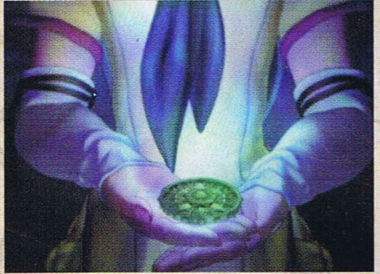
BIT ON THE SIDE?

Emblem is a sizeable quest, spanning 31 chapters. Unlike other Emblem games though, there doesn't seem to be any branches (or 'Gaiden' chapters) that divert from the main quest. Although that's not much of a disappointment to us in the Japanese version. Maybe we're wrong and we've missed something, but at the time of writing these extras seem worryingly absent.

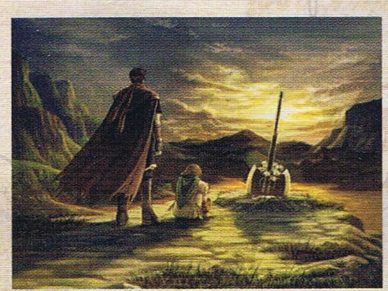
△ These handy tutorials give a visual description of the concepts behind important battle tactics.



△ To defend this structure from the armies outside, you'll need to hold the entrance.



△ What's this emblem? We haven't a clue.



△ Some of the stills are beautifully drawn.

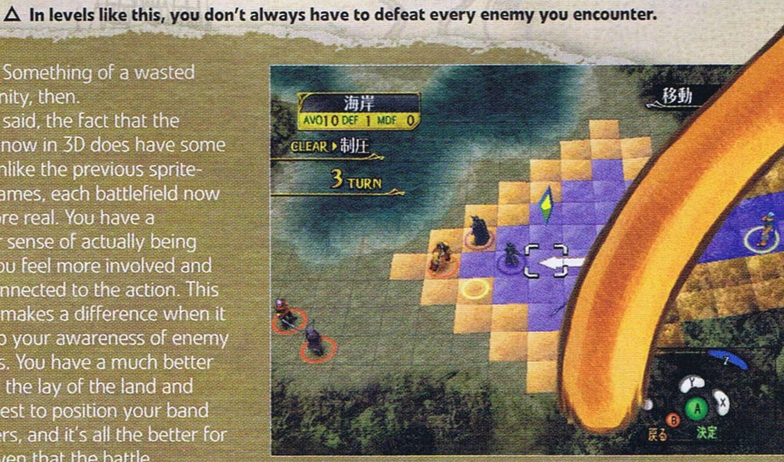
△ In levels like this, you don't always have to defeat every enemy you encounter.

strike and you feel it. It's one damn cool animation and it looks dangerous as hell.

Some of this is lost in *Souen*. Sure, the critical hits are fairly nice, visually speaking, but there's rarely a decent sense of weight behind the attacks. Given the potential that using 3D character models presents, and the visual effects and extra clout that the Gamecube is capable of, you would have thought that Intelligent Systems might have put in just a little more effort in this area.

The unfortunate result is that, for the most part, the animated attack scenes are, well, just a little pointless – dull little animations of the characters nonchalantly trading blows that you'll inevitably want to turn off. Something of a wasted opportunity, then.

That said, the fact that the game is now in 3D does have some merit. Unlike the previous sprite-based games, each battlefield now feels more real. You have a stronger sense of actually being there, you feel more involved and more connected to the action. This actually makes a difference when it comes to your awareness of enemy positions. You have a much better grasp of the lay of the land and where best to position your band of fighters, and it's all the better for it. So, given that the battle animations aren't actually important to the game itself, their lack of overall finesse is forgivable.



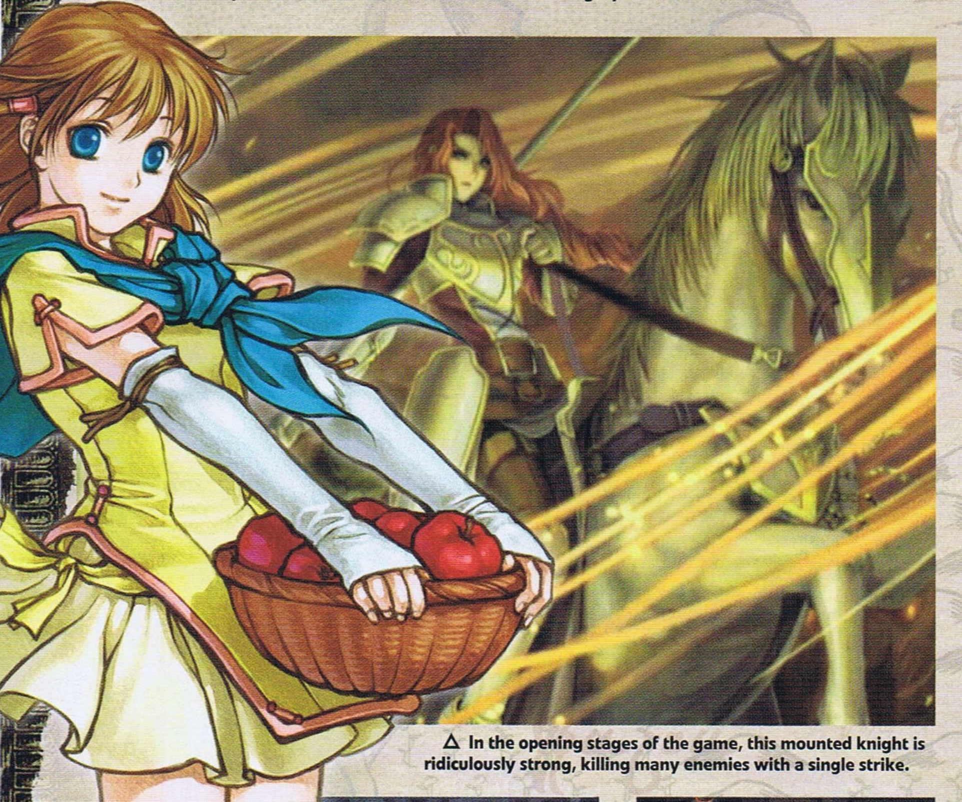
△ Different terrain will affect movement potential and weapon accuracy. Hiding in woodland is a useful tactic.



△ Any action in the field earns EXP.



△ The grey characters here have used their turn.



△ In the opening stages of the game, this mounted knight is ridiculously strong, killing many enemies with a single strike.

NEW RECRUITS

Drafting for the cause…



■ From time to time you'll encounter characters in the battlefield that aren't part of your group.



■ You'll find that you have the option to talk to them. They often give you items and advice but more importantly…



■ … you might be able to recruit them to your cause, which comes in very handy if any of your characters have died.

In terms of the actual game itself, it's just like every other Fire Emblem. And in light of the tragic, action orientated direction that *Advance Wars: Under Fire* has taken, there's nothing that could make us happier.

Each level of the game is a separate battle, which is played out on grids of different sizes, each with its own set of structures, such as buildings, bridges, trees and walls that all need to be navigated to find your way to the enemy.

You take it in turns to move characters around the field, whereupon you're shown your character's movement range and a stretching arrow indicating the route they will take to their destination. Each character has their own strengths, weaknesses, skills and weapon types, and each weapon has an advantage or disadvantage over an enemy in the simple and traditional scissors, paper, stone style.

The goal of each level is to simply out-fight your opponent by moving wisely around the battlefield and pitting the correct weapon against the enemy in order to gain the advantage. Once you've hacked your way through the entire battlefield, it's the end of the level and time for some extensive dialogue to further both the plot and your understanding of each character's story.

It's a brilliant battle system that requires extensive forethought in order to emerge victorious. You need to set up formations and battle lines to maximise your small force's potential (you're almost always heavily out-numbered) using walls, bridges and so forth to ensure that you're well defended. This is always of the utmost importance in Emblem.

Your characters will stay with you through the duration of the game, with kills earning EXP, which can be used to level-up and nurture a character's abilities. If they die, that's it, you don't get them back, which results in a need to really care for your troops. One silly mistake in battle will cost you dearly, the enemy AI is very cunning – it will always strike at your weakest character if it can, and it won't pull any punches when it comes to ruining your plans. The only way to win is by taking your



OST FANS…

Emblem's original composer, Yuka Tsujiyoko, now takes on a supervisory role, leaving Saki Haruyama to take the position of lead composer. While the game's themes aren't quite up to the old standard, there are some undoubtedly brilliant pieces of music here. On the whole, Emblem's outstanding score has been upheld.



△ Each and every chapter requires a different kind of strategy.



△ Some axes can be thrown for ranged, but inaccurate attacks.



- A masterpiece.
- Brilliant character development.
- Awesome cutscenes.



- We can't understand the story.
- No side-quests?
- Poor battle scenes.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Gladius
Activision
NGC/88 70%
The only other turn-based strategy game on Gamecube. Although it requires patience.



BACKS TO THE WALL
Sometimes it pays to hold your ground…


You're not supposed to just kill everything. You're holed up in some old ruins, charged with defending the weaker characters hiding inside.


You have a small courtyard with three entry points and a green square that, should the enemy seize it, means it's game over.


The first decision you need to make is how best to split up your party. One of our characters, a mounted knight, is super-strong…


… so she can take care of herself. Use her to cover the main entrance and defend the ruins from the cavalry waiting at the front door.


The rest of the team aren't so tough, so we need to split them up into bigger groups. The tougher ones will take the east side…


… while the rest can take the west side. With such small entry points, you will need ranged characters to fire over the top of your point-men.


Rotate the characters on the east and west. Heal and attack in turn to soak up the damage. The knight to the south is tough as nails…


… allowing her to circle the fort and surprise the enemy at the rear, helping any flanking teams that run into trouble.


8 VISUALS
Great cutscenes, but functional character models and battles.

8 SOUNDS
Transitions can be jarring, but the music and effects are great.


9 MASTERY
There's no better strategy game on the Gamecube.

8 LIFESPAN
It's quite long and the later levels prove very tough indeed.

time to really weigh up your options before charging forward. In this respect the game can often feel very similar to chess, as you attempt to goad the enemy into falling into your little traps.

It's one of the most rewarding experiences you'll ever come across, and it works on two levels. First and foremost is that feeling of elation you get from watching your carefully considered plans turn the tide of battle in your favour. There really is nothing like that feeling of watching your troops triumph in the face of adversity, knowing full well that it was the masterful tactics from your throbbing, juicy brain that did it. Secondly is the character nurturing system, you'll feel a great sense of pride in watching your super-strong units destroy the opposition with ease, and your fondness for the weaker characters will blossom as you take them in hand and build them into useful warriors.

We love it. So much so that the fact that we can't understand the specifics of the story is genuinely difficult to bear. There are also loads of menu screens between battles that are pretty much incomprehensible outside our current understanding of Fire Emblem's basics.

What this means is that we're missing out on the finer nuances of character development and pairing, and therefore a whole level of depth to the battle system. Likewise, as the dialogue is of absolute importance, it's impossible to play the game to its full potential, which will explain the 89% score to the right there. Just bear in mind that when we get an English version of the game, that score will rise significantly…

GERAINT EVANS

> **"WHEN WE GET AN ENGLISH VERSION, THE SCORE WILL RISE SIGNIFICANTLY…"**



GBA LINK?
On the back of the Japanese box, it has the GBA-GC link symbol. Try as we might, we couldn't figure out how this works. We even tried hooking it up with various Fire Emblem carts in our GBAs. Maybe we're just stupid, but try as we might there was no joy. If any lucky importers out there have figured out how it works, feel free to enlighten us.

VERDICT
If you don't see this as your kind of thing, then it's about time you sorted yourself out and made a point of trying it.

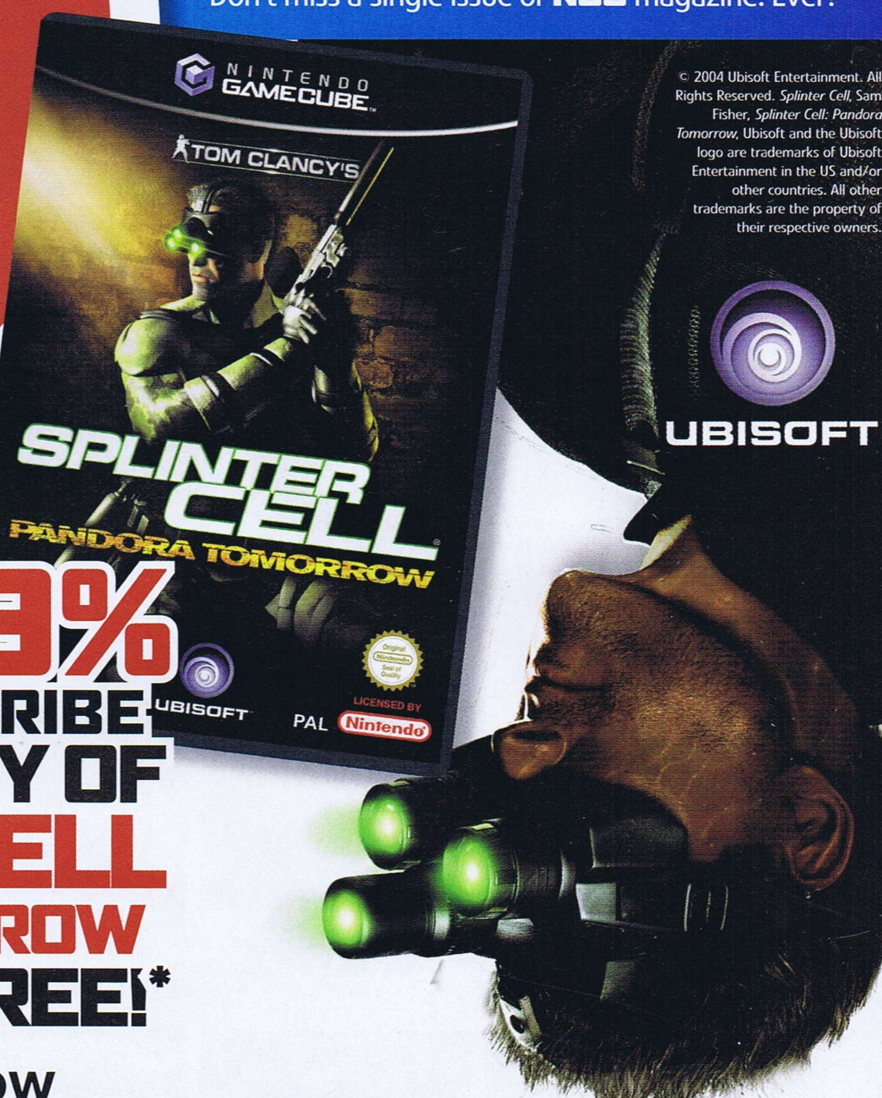






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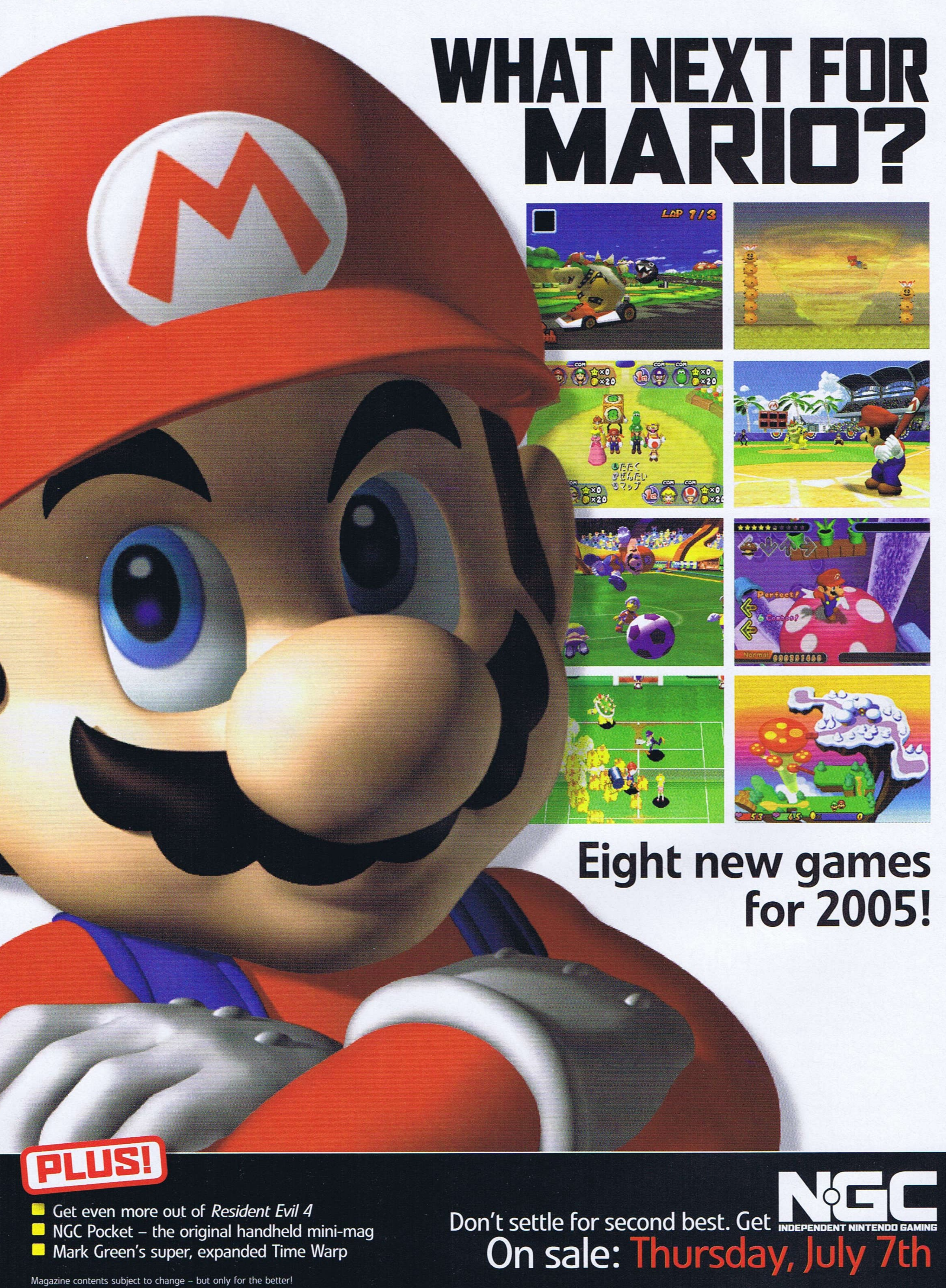
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NEXT MONTH
"It's-a me…"



THE ART OF BOX

Usually ignored in our mouth-slavering haste to get to the game disc, Gamecube box artwork could teach Neil Buchanan and the Mona Lisa a thing or two about painting. We ask a real-life art expert to appraise the artistic value of the floppy flaps of cardboard that are tucked into game boxes.



WHO IS DR NEIL MULHOLLAND?

Dr Neil Mulholland is uniquely qualified to critique the artwork on game boxes for us. He's a lecturer in contemporary art and theory at the Edinburgh College of Art (within the Centre for Visual and Cultural Studies), and he's had plenty to say about videogames during his distinguished career. He's contributed articles like "The Colours are all the Wrong Shape" to posh magazines like Product, and he has his own website at http://www.neilmulholland.co.uk/. It's like this: what Dr Neil doesn't know about art hasn't been invented



Resident Evil 4

NGC verdict: A-

This was clearly plan B – WHSmith were never going to dedicate their shelves to an image of Leon having his head chainsawed off at the neck by that somewhat disgruntled Baghead character. But funnily enough, we like it all the same. Someone at Capcom was obviously paying attention to silhouette lessons in art class. Or is just a complete psycho.

Dr Neil's verdict:

"Resident Evil 4 *establishes itself as a fissure in the pictorial space. The furnace of fire tries and tests the outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing.*

"The artist casts a bewildering shadow over the work. 'All will be dark and black: black devils, black bodies, black souls, and they may, without light, have perceivance of one another. Or if there be a duskish light there, to represent one another's rueful countenances and other frightful spectacles…' The revolutionary character emerging from the inferno has a particularly peculiar way of standing."

In a similar vein: *Resident Evil* – nothing says mind-bending horror like… nothing.

Burnout 2: Point of Impact

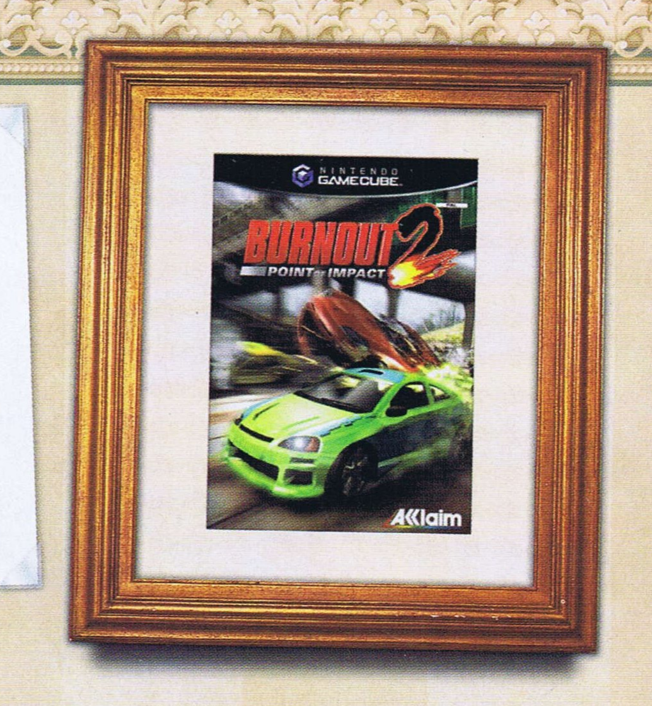
NGC verdict: B

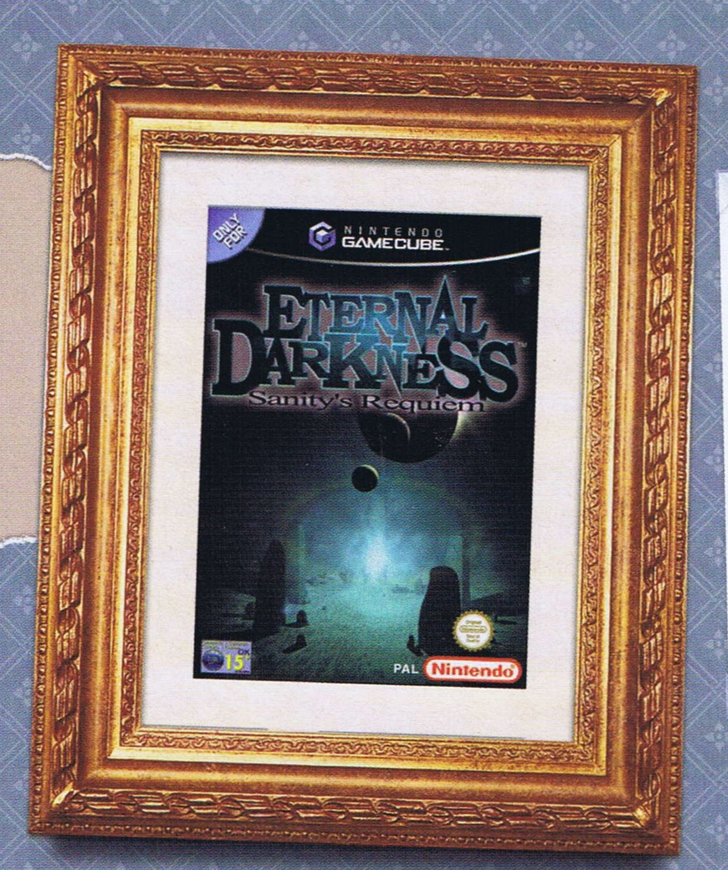
The cover of *Burnout 2* is so damned blurry that you're left wondering whether the artist was drawing it on the bus. And what happened to the number plates? That's clearly illegal. The cars more than meet the EU quota for eye-searing shininess, but marks have been deducted for forgetting to draw in the drivers.

Dr Neil's verdict:

"Burnout 2: Point of Impact *declaims that when one creates technology, one also engineers the faults and mistakes that plague the machine. The dynamic, painterly strands show how technology and the accident are caught in a dynamic relationship – akin to Descartes' manic quest to banish doubt. The more complex the technology one develops, the more evasive become the faults that cause the machine to malfunction. Thus, the crash represents the attempt to order the disorder of the system and drive out the chaotic influence of the accident."*

In a similar vein: *Need for Speed Underground 2* – the same picture from the perspective of a squashed pedestrian.





Eternal Darkness Sanity's Requiem

NGC verdict: D
The sort of moody teenage goth 'masterpiece' we'd imagine Avril Lavigne to scrawl on her guitar case. Aside from the ability to draw shadows that point in the right direction, the artist doesn't take his work beyond that of a 1970s rock album cover.

Dr Neil's verdict:
"As Arthur Rambo wrote: 'Thorns whisper perfidious penance as bats unleash sanguine fangs. Foolish mortals secrete perfidious abattoirs as oblivion engulfs the spectral requiem. Darkness ascends silver deception while pyres collapse from Elysian arterial spray. Prayers unleash the nocturnal torment of my Master and entangle his bloody soul.' This work is hostile to plain meanings, declamations, false sentimentality and matter-of-fact description. Its goal is to clothe the Ideal in a perceptible form whose goal is not in itself, but whose sole purpose was to express the Ideal."

In a similar vein: *Doshin the Giant* has the same horrific psychological undertone.

Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles

NGC verdict: B-
This cover is seemingly aimed exclusively at people who can recite all 1000+ pages of the Lord of the Rings trilogy *in elvish* and people with a disturbing fascination with large women in big, pointy metallic bras. The big Cs in the logo are lost in the swirls of fancy calligraphy, the artist obviously couldn't be bothered with drawing some kind of background, and everyone's noses are disturbingly small. So it's full of freaks, pretty much. Fantastic.

Dr Neil's verdict:
"This work is a manifesto on the way various forms of graphic design, pop culture and fine arts are compressed in contemporary globalised digital culture. It melds such influences as Japanese manga, cartoon books and anime with traditional Japanese painting and printmaking.

"The image refers to the two-dimensionality of animation, as well as its ability to instantly connect us with the traditions of 'nihon-ga'."

In a similar vein: *Lost Kingdoms II* has similar mystical roundness going on.





Mario Party 6

NGC verdict: B
Seemingly an attempt to keep cramming stuff in and seeing which breaks first: the artist's hand, your eyeballs, or the very laws of art. There's a classy juxtaposition of light and dark, sure, but the artist should stick to smiley faces – Bowser's over-the-shoulder look makes him look the wrong kind of horny.

Dr Neil's verdict:
"Cheerful, happy, optimistic themes by no means predominate in this work. The apparently positive mood possesses an undercurrent of a darker nature. It definitely contains elements of potential power or threat in its iconographic details and pictorial language. There is perforation, too – in the concrete bodily sense as well as the figurative sense. The monsters, absurd creatures, skeletons, snakes and beasts of prey which populate this picture add a more or less tangible, nightmarish or violent character to this multi-figured, pattern-like work."

In a similar vein: *Mario Party 5* is Shigsy's theory of what The Big Bang might have looked like.

ART ATTACK

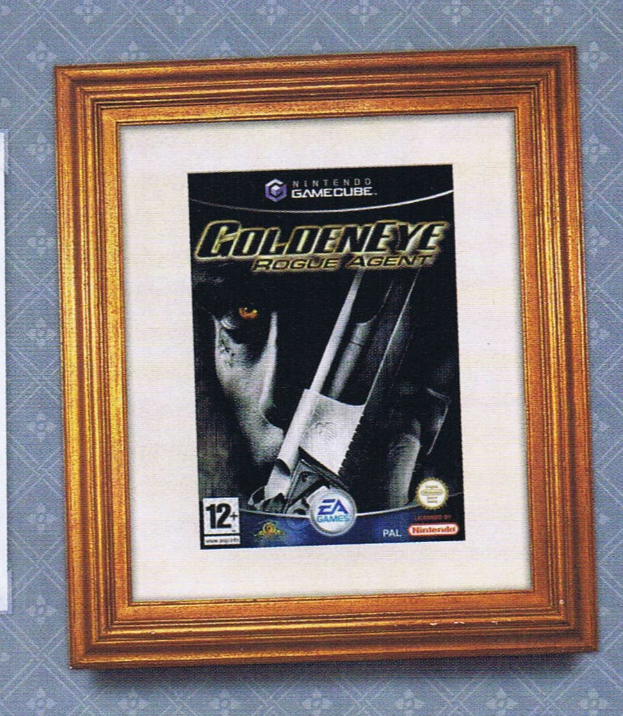
"existential facial follicle angst"

GoldenEye: Rogue Agent

NGC verdict: A-
Yes, we get it. Golden. Eye. Meanwhile, the monochrome palette represents the stark, disturbing coldness of almost pure evil. Or maybe that's just the enormous gun, you can never tell… The guy who drew this piece can certainly 'do' sinister, and anyone that familiar with the detail on a gun gets a big, nervous thumbs-up from us. We're not that stupid. Most of the time.

Dr Neil's verdict:
"The steely eye glints, daring us to enter Jock Vettrichio's world of paranoiac fantasy espionage. Private eye noir blends seamlessly with contemporary plasma pantonality. It depicts an image of a man-machine, twisted and rotten inside. Maybe he will be washed down the sewer with the rest of the rottenness sometime. What stops it from happening? He doesn't want to look in that damn mirror any more."

In a similar vein: *Hitman 2*: the missing legs are symbolic of the irony that Agent 47 can hide, but he can't run. Oh, wait – he can run.





The Legend of Zelda Four Swords Adventures

NGC verdict: C-
Link tries his best to look angry – the resulting look of rage is equivalent to someone who's had their cheese sandwich stolen. We like it this much: not much. The eyes aren't frightening, the guy can't draw grass and drawing four swords under the words "Four Swords" is just taking the mick.

Dr Neil's verdict:
"This allegorical history painting could earn itself a European reputation as uncontested leader of the Neoclassical movement. The four brothers could easily have been chosen by the Arboreal Cornwalisationists – largely unheard-of naturalists in the extreme south of the country who believe that there is no need for reflection on Machiavellian topiary. They would say that the four figures are pictured defying the Curiaces – the champions of the town of Albas. They are taking an oath that they will either win or die."

In a similar vein: *Super Smash Bros. Melee* – as angry as Mario gets.

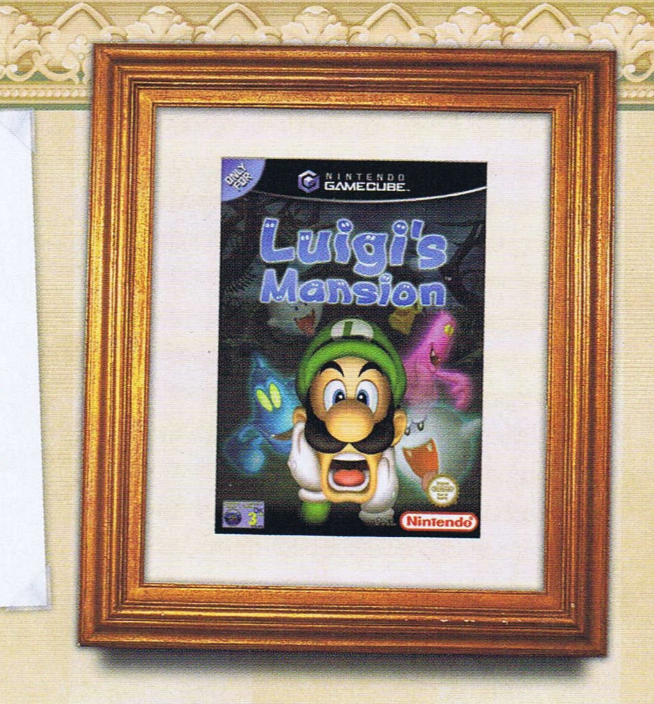
Luigi's Mansion

NGC verdict: B
The scariest thing about this is Luigi's missing neck. Or is it Nintendo's obsession with putting eyes on everything – even the alphabet? Marks have been deducted here for obscuring the mansion behind the logo, giving Luigi a plastic moustache, and for copying Casper.

Dr Neil's verdict:
"'I was going down the street behind two friends,' wrote the Italian symbolist Sebastiano Luigi in 1892. 'The sun went down behind a hill overlooking the city and my mansion. I felt a trace of sadness and the sky suddenly turned blood red. I watched the flaming clouds over the mansion and the city and my friends kept on.'

"'I stood there shaking with fear, and I felt a great unending scream penetrate unending nature. I felt a loud scream and I really heard a loud scream… The vibrations in the air did not only affect my eye, but my ear as well because I really heard a scream. Then I grew a large moustache.' Luigi's Mansion is regarded as an icon of existential facial follicle angst."

In a similar vein: *Blood Omen 2*: another mansion, another light-hearted fright.





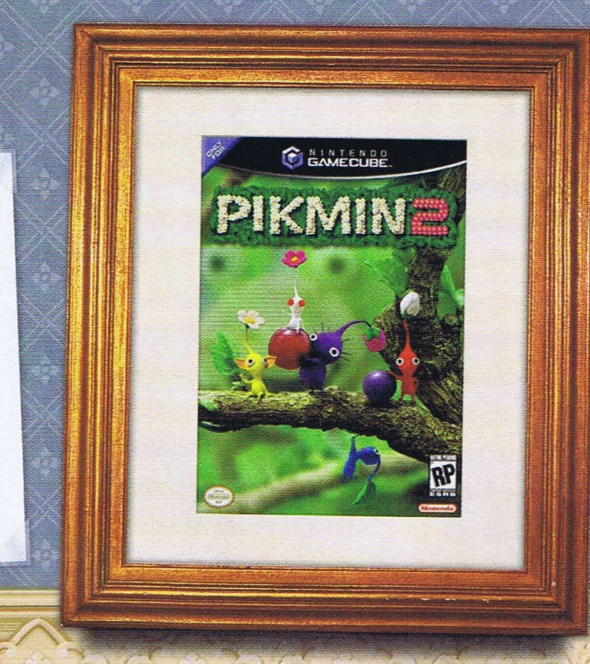
Metroid Prime 2: Echoes

NGC verdict: C
The giant space shoulder-pads steal the show once again, although it's pretty hard to miss the dozing Chozo in the background. Grandparents, eh? A typically tedious Nintendo 'action' shot, all in all. We have seen more sense of movement from a dead snail. And someone should tell Nintendo that lens flare only looks good in games.

Dr Neil's verdict:
"The surviving right panel of the groundbreaking Metroid diptych (the left panel was destroyed by a V2 rocket) shows a figure celebrating 'the unconsciousness of humanity: their stupidity, animalism and dreams.'

"Employing ultraviolence, the fragmentation and multiple viewpoints of Cubism, the artist predicted the machine, and anticipated that it would result in a bleak, purposeless life for humankind. 'Elephants are very big. Motor cars go quickly,' he could say about this work."

In a similar vein: The pads were even juicier for the original *Metriod Prime*: fashion is fickle.



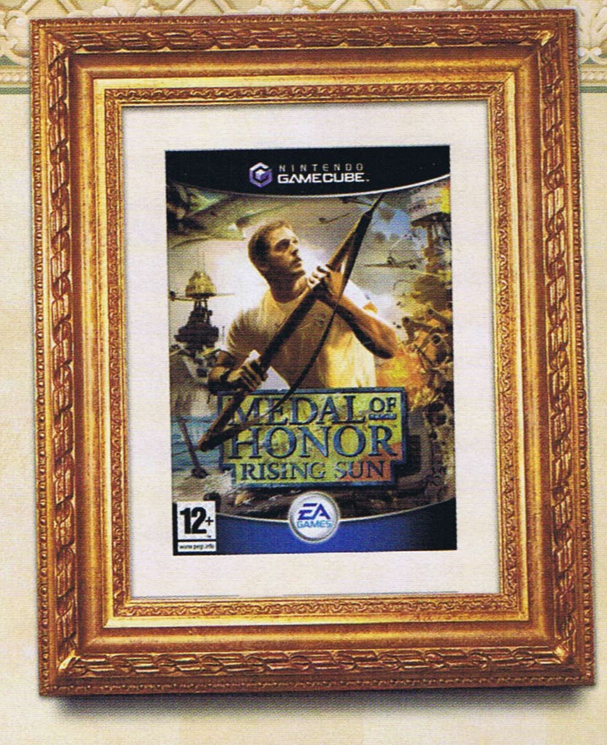
Pikmin 2

NGC verdict: A
Heart… overloaded… with love! Sweet plasticine plant-men wave happily with their plasticine arms. All very nice, until you spot the eyes in the background. This is actually a photograph of course, but the composition – especially when it comes to those eyes – is first class. And did we mention the eyes?

Dr Neil's verdict:
"Taking his lead from the work of children, the insane and gardeners, the artist has spearheaded the emergence of a green anarchism that has strong roots in European ultra-left Marxism.

"One can imagine that the artist was arrested and shot by Stalinist forces in May 1968 and currently lives and works in New York."

In a similar vein: The worms from, er, *Worms* are cool in a way that Pikmin just aren't.



Medal of Honor: Rising Sun

NGC verdict: B-
Never has the messiness and confusion of war been so accurately pictured as when we see a Littlewoods catalogue model caught way out of his depth. There's a lot going on here. Almost too much, in fact. We suspect the artist might have 'issues'. Especially with drawing explosions.

Dr Neil's verdict:
"This directly confronts Mallarmé's poem, Les Fenêtres. 'I marvel at myself, I seem an angel! And I die, and I love – whether the glass might be art or mysticism – to be reborn, bearing my dream as a diadem, under that former sky where Beauty once flourished.'

"The central figure, set in deep chiaroscuro and surrounded by a busy collage of war and guns, attempts to break through to the Beauty epitomized by the expansive black ground above him. But he remains trapped in the violence of the picture plane. He will never wake up and smell the frappé."

In a similar vein: Russell Crowe look-alike does the 'I'm at war, and I'm mildly worried' bit for *Call of Duty: Finest Hour*.

N·GC TIPS, HINTS, CHEATS AND EXTRAS

EXTENDED PLAY

TWENTY THINGS YOU POSSIBLY DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT

RESIDENT EVIL 4

Bet you think you've seen it all. You've probably completed *Resident Evil 4* a couple of times by now, and you might have taken a shot at the Professional difficulty. Maybe you're working on your high score in the Mercenaries mini-game, or talking online about what you'd like to see in *Resident Evil 5* (we're holding out for a prequel starring Chris and Jill, dealing with the fall of the Umbrella corporation). It's a sure bet that unless you're truly obsessed, you haven't actually seen everything. As a result, we have forced a dozen illegal immigrants to sit in a dank basement and play through *Resident Evil 4* over and over again for your education and entertainment. Here are some of the little-known facts, errors, strategies and notes that they've come up with. Enjoy!



1: A BLACK BELT IN EGG FU

Curious sorts have probably noticed that you can throw eggs. Hitting a Ganado with an egg produces an effect not unlike that of a stun grenade.



2: LUNCHTIME

If you try to go fishing for the bass in the lake in Chapter 1-3 before you dispatch Del Lago, he will register a complaint… When you reach the dock, go to its end and put a few rounds into the water. Del Lago will appear for a frank 'debate'.



3: DON'T MESS WITH LUIS

Watch your fire during the siege of the cabin in Chapter 2-3. If you hit Luis too often, you'll see a special scene where he shoots Leon in the chest. Game over.





WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Now that the actual play guide is complete, we take you through some of the things you might have missed in Resident Evil 4. Did you see the fossils of the Plagas? How about the hidden cutscene where Ada Wong makes her first appearance? Read on, you have a lot to learn.



WHAT WE SAID IN ISSUE 104!

The complete package easily matches Gamecube's top tier of games. It's as well produced as Wind Waker and Metroid Prime – and stands alongside both of them as the finest examples of entertainment the Gamecube can provide.




TIPS EXTRA
■ Stuck on a game? Then check out the miasma of cheats, hints and tips on offer here. p90

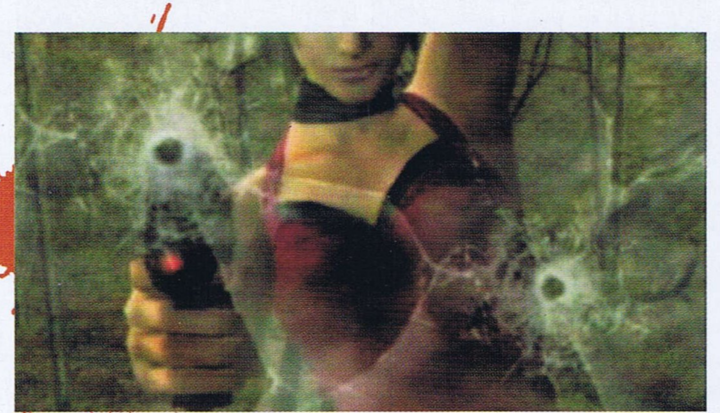

LETTERS
■ This month: we couldn't be bothered with answering letters, so a trained monkey did it. p98


SKILL CLUB
■ Skill Club gets even, erm, skiller (sorry) with this month's four page makeover. p94


RETRO
■ Please God, make the a cappella Nintendo tunes end! They're injuring my brain! p102


DIRECTORY
■ To quote Lewis Caroll, "There is no purer literature than the Directory in NGC."* p108

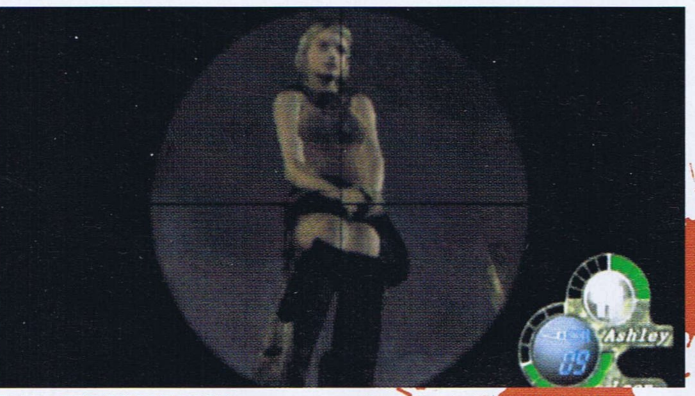
GO GO...



4: THE HIDDEN CUTSCENE
Not many people know about this, oddly enough. At the beginning of Chapter 1-3, immediately turn around and follow Mendez back into his bedroom. You'll see a special movie, which features the first appearance of one Ada Wong. The cutscene goes well out of its way to show Leon's stray bullet putting a hole in the painting of Saddler, but if you check after the movie, the bullet hole has disappeared.



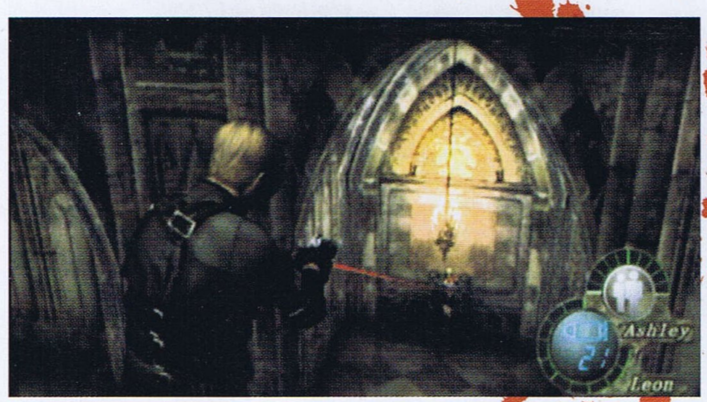
7: A MURDER OF CROWS
In Chapter One, you'll see several crows along the paths around the village. If you shoot them, they will drop money and treasure. When you reach the clearing by the huts in Chapter 1-3, you'll find a murder of crows. The birds are clearly scheming against you. If you kill them all by dropping a hand or incendiary grenade into their midst, you'll find that they were surprisingly wealthy…



5: THAT'S SOME NICE UNDERWEAR, MISS
If you can manoeuvre Leon's head around somehow (don't worry, you'll manage it somehow) so that he's underneath Ashley, she, thinking he's attempting to take a peek at her undergarments, will call him a pervert. This is easiest to do when you're at the base of a ladder waiting for her; simply look up and zoom in with the sniper rifle.



8: FOSSILISED PLAGAS
Here's an interesting plot point that a lot of players miss. When you reach the mines underneath Salazar's castle, look on the path about halfway between the mine track and the power switch. You'll find a pile of rocks that contain fossilised Plagas, hinting that the parasites are much older than you might have thought. Could we be seeing more of them in *Resident Evil 5*?



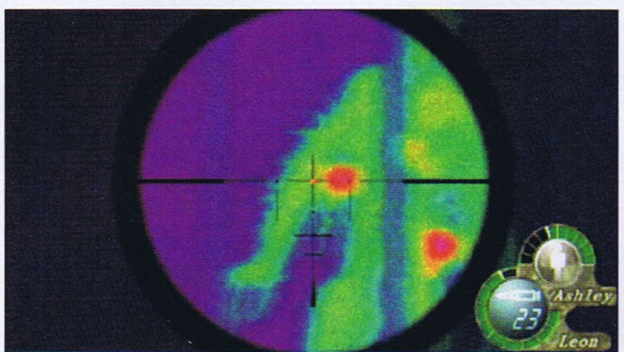
6: THERMAL VISION
On your second time through the game, you'll be allowed to keep all of your equipment from your last play through. This includes the infrared scope. The scope's fun to play around with, especially as it doesn't so much pick up on warm things as it does important things. For example, you can use it to find things like bear traps hidden in the tall grass. It's particularly useful against the Novistadors.



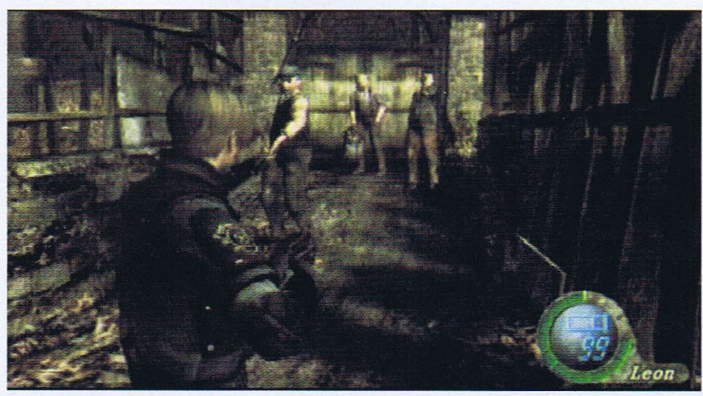
9: A RELIGIOUS OBJECTION
When you leave the sewers in Chapter 2-3, you'll find that the Illuminados have started an impromptu prayer meeting in the castle's main hall. If you disrupt their ceremony with violence – a hand grenade or rocket will work well – then the dead monks will drop Spinels. Their supervisor is also carrying a rare and valuable Illuminados pendant. That will do nicely.

*Quote may contain lies.

10: A MYSTERIOUS BUNDLE



In the penultimate stage of the game, Leon will enter a broken-down prison haunted by an Iron Maiden. Next to the doorway that leads to the cellblock, inside the small chest – there's something wriggling inside. All we know is that it stops wriggling when you shoot it…



11: WORTHY ENCOUNTER

If you try to evade pursuit during Chapter 1-1 and leave the village through its northeastern exit, you'll find a man with a chainsaw, a.k.a. Dr. Salvador, who's accompanied by a pair of pitchfork-wielding associates. If you're new to the game, it's wise to avoid this encounter. However, you'll get a ruby for your troubles.

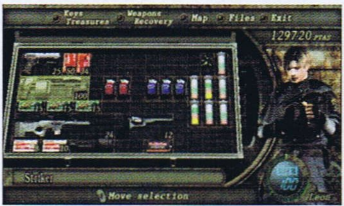


12: THE SHOOTING GALLERY

It's surreal, but the shooting range is one of the most addictive and difficult parts of *Resi 4*. You will find ranges at four different places throughout the game, in Chapters 2-3, 4-1, 5-1 and 5-3. Each time you reach a new range, you will open up a new game: A, B, C, or D.

Unless you're very confident about your skills, use the rapid-fire set. The TMP's a bit inaccurate if you lean on the trigger, so try to fire off one careful shot at a time. To get a high score, you have to hit every villager, getting as many headshots as possible. To trigger the appearance of the Salazar target, you have to hit five targets without missing a shot.

You can earn up to five bottle caps in each shooting range by earning over 4000 points, and by hitting all the villager targets. If you successfully collect all the bottle caps in a row, you'll receive a total of 125,000 pesetas. Unfortunately, since your bottle cap collection carries over from game to game, you can only get the cash once. Oh well, you'll have to find the cash for that upgrade elsewhere.



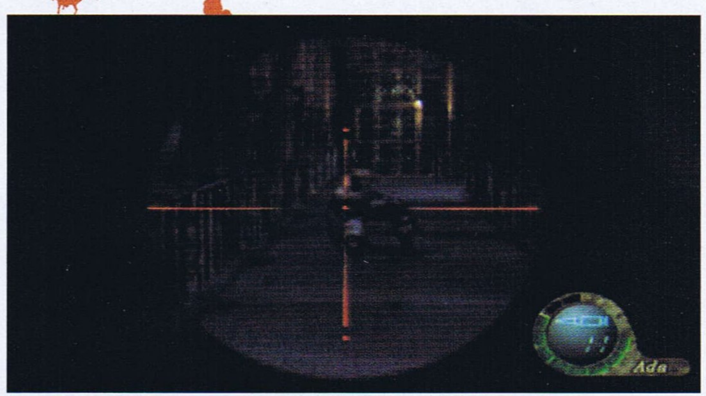


13: EXCLUSIVE OPTIONS

As you probably know, when you've upgraded a firearm to its fullest potential, you then unlock a final, exclusive upgrade. What are those upgrades, though? We're glad you asked. For your educational needs, here's a list.



Handgun: your critical hit rate is multiplied by 5.
Punisher: bullets from this gun can penetrate up to five targets.
Red9: the firepower is raised to 5.
Blacktail: the firepower is raised to 3.4.
Shotgun: the shotgun's effective range goes up.
Riot Gun: the firepower is raised to 10.
Striker: never carry shotgun rounds again with the fully upgraded Striker. Its drum clip can hold a total of 100 shells!
Broken Butterfly: its hit power goes up to a jaw-dropping 50.
Killer7: oddly, it has no exclusive upgrade.
Rifle: the firepower is raised to 18.
Semi-Auto Rifle: the firing speed drops to 0.40 seconds.
TMP: each bullet from the TMP has a firepower of 1.8.
Mine Thrower: the mines, when launched, will now home in on your targets. This is great fun against snipers.
Handcannon: it'll cost you a fair bit of change to upgrade the Handcannon, but it's worth it; you'll get infinite ammunition, and the gun's firepower goes up to 99!



14: ADA VS. KRAUSER

The Assignment Ada mini-game is easy enough. The only real problems you'll have are inventory management and smacking down JJ when he makes one of his all-too-frequent appearances (if you need a bit of help with that, go for headshots. If you can keep him staggering backwards, he won't have time to warm up his chaingun).

At the end of the game, you'll have to contend with Krauser and his retractable wonder-claw, just as in the main game. Ada's arsenal doesn't have the raw firepower of Leon's, so this is often a slow war of attrition. However, the mistake a lot of players make is to fight this battle exactly as you would if you were playing as Leon – toe to toe with Krauser, blasting his knees at every opportunity. Ada doesn't have to do that. You can mess up Krauser's entire attack pattern by doing one simple thing: constantly back away from him.

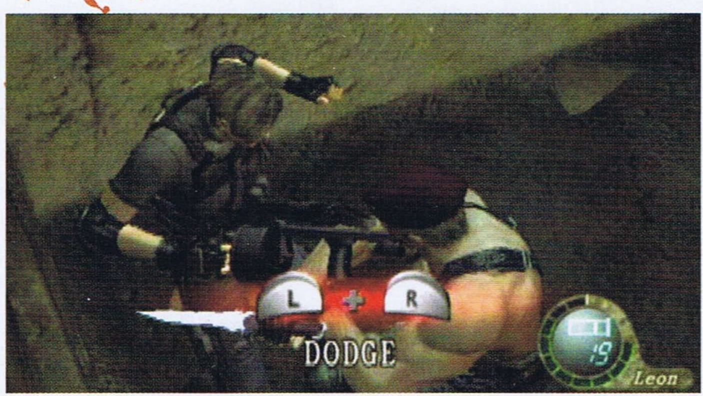
Ada moves a great deal faster than Leon, and you have much more room to move on the catwalk. If you just back up, Krauser's attacks will almost always miss you completely. You'll still get a prompt to dodge, but they won't even come close. When Krauser misses a swing, arm the TMP and put a few dozen holes in him.

If that doesn't make this easy enough for you, there's a glitch you can abuse. The moment Krauser appears, run around him and get to the door he came in through. Leave, then come back in. Krauser will wind up near the lift. You've got all the time in the world to put a couple of rifle slugs into him, then leave and come back in. Just keep resetting his position,



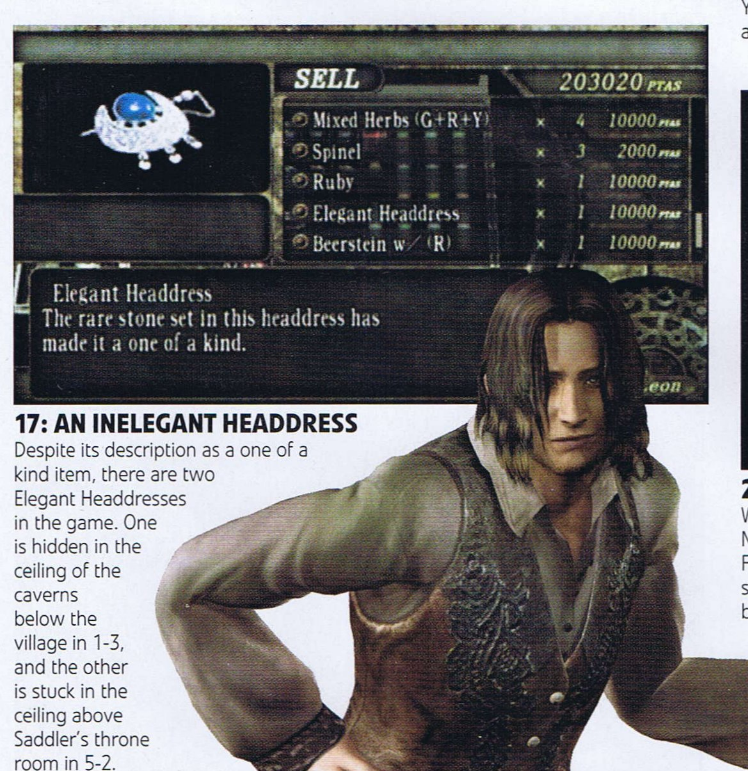
15: LEON'S FAVOURITE HANDGUN

Whenever Leon uses a handgun in an animated sequence, he'll always be holding the default handgun that you started the game with, even if you've sold it, bought another one, or dropped it.



16: A KNIFE YOU CAN'T LOSE

Leon's knife has a bizarre habit of reappearing in its sheath, particularly during cutscenes. You can see this during his first fight with Ada, and after the knife fight in Chapter 5-3. His knife will be sheathed, despite it being elsewhere in the scene.



17: AN INELEGANT HEADDRESS

Despite its description as a one of a kind item, there are two Elegant Headdresses in the game. One is hidden in the ceiling of the caverns below the village in 1-3, and the other is stuck in the ceiling above Saddler's throne room in 5-2.

18: ALL EYES ON HIM



After you dispatch Bitores Mendez, use the rifle to zoom in on his face. Despite the fact that one of his eyes just fell out, both are still in his head.



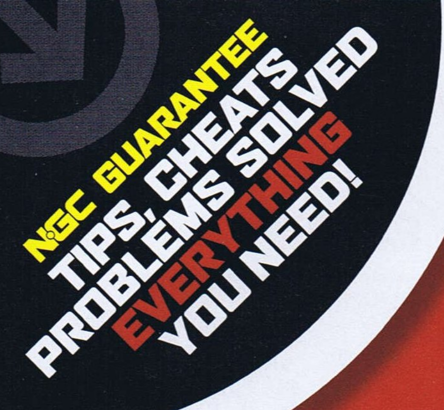
19: THE REVENGE OF THE COW

You have probably been tempted to go after the livestock in the village, haven't you? Haven't you?! The cows, however, will fight back if you give them any sort of chance to do so. If you stab a cow a few times, it will retaliate.

20: RAIDING THE NEST

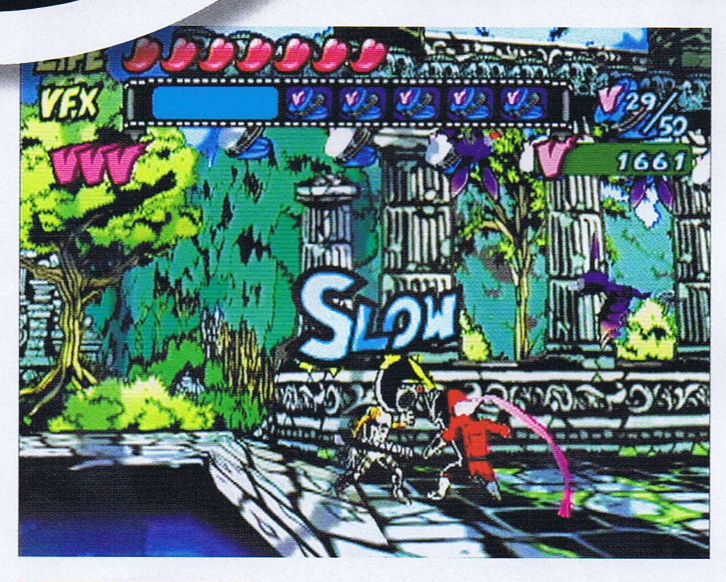
When you stumble into the Novistadors' nest during Chapter Four, take a moment to use up some ammunition on it. A few rifle bullets or a long burst from the TMP will send it crashing to the floor. Once it's gone, you'll be able to pick up about a dozen assorted Eyes.





THE TIPS YOU NEED FOR THE GAMES YOU'RE PLAYING...

TIPS EXTRA



VIEWTIFUL JOE 2

UNLOCKABLE LIST

ULTRA V-RATED MODE
Complete the game on V-Rated mode.

V-RATED MODE
Complete the game on Adult mode.

RAINBOW V
Complete all of the Chambers.

RED V
Complete the game on the Kids or Adult difficulty setting.

SUPER VJ MODE
Beat all 37 Chambers.

CHAMBER 1
Complete Reel 1, Act 4.

CHAMBER 2
Beat the slippery floor scene in Reel 5, Act 1 with at least five lives left.

CHAMBER 3
Make sure you get killed by a locker.

CHAMBER 4
Complete a scene with one life left.

CHAMBER 5
Complete Reel 2, Act 3.

CHAMBER 6
Complete Chamber 1.

CHAMBER 7
Get all 250 film canisters on any Reel.

CHAMBER 8
Get killed, but don't reset.

CHAMBER 9
Complete Reel 3, Act 1.

CHAMBER 10
Complete Chamber 1 and enter the bonus scene in Reel 4, Act 2.

CHAMBER 11
Complete Chamber 2 with an overall ranking of A or higher.

CHAMBER 12
Get a V ranking in 5 scenes in a row.

CHAMBER 13
Finish a scene without losing a life.

CHAMBER 14
Complete Reel 4, Act 2.

CHAMBER 15
Get a Rainbow V ranking on the UFO fire scene in Reel 4, Act 1.

CHAMBER 16
Without VFX powers, complete the final scene of Reel 2, Act 1.

CHAMBER 17
Complete Chamber 8.

CHAMBER 18
Complete Chamber 9 and buy the sliding power-up.

CHAMBER 19
Defeat Long John in Reel 3, Act 2 with a rank of A or higher.

CHAMBER 20
Beat the kitchen scene in Reel 1, Act 3 with a Rainbow V ranking.

CHAMBER 21
Complete Chambers 3 and 12.

CHAMBER 22
Complete Chamber 13.

CHAMBER 23
Complete Reel 7, Act 3 with over 200,000 Viewtifuls.

CHAMBER 24
Get Joe thrown out of the monorail ten times in the monorail scene in Reel 3, Act 1.

CHAMBER 25
In Reel 3, Act 2, don't use any VFX powers from the time the gear scene ends to when the next one starts.

CHAMBER 26
Complete Chamber 17 and story mode on the Kids difficulty setting.

CHAMBER 27
Buy the Redhot Kick power-up and complete Chamber 18.

CHAMBER 28
Complete the switch scene in Reel 7, Act 1 with at least 30 seconds left.

CHAMBER 29
Pick up all of the film canisters in Reel 5, Act 1.

CHAMBER 30
Get a rank of Rainbow V for five scenes in a row.

CHAMBER 31
Do 10 Ukemis in a row in Reel 7, Act 1.

CHAMBER 32
Complete Chamber 23.

CHAMBER 33
Complete Chamber 24.

CHAMBER 34
Finish Reel 1, Act 4, but don't pick up a single film canister.

CHAMBER 35
Beat the Adult difficulty setting.

CHAMBER 36
Clear Chamber 27 and complete story mode on the Kids difficulty setting.

CHAMBER 37
Complete Chamber 6 with a D ranking three times on story mode.

DONKEY KONGA 2

DONKEY KONGA 1 SOUNDSETS
Use a memory card with a *Donkey Konga* save on it.

FIFA STREET

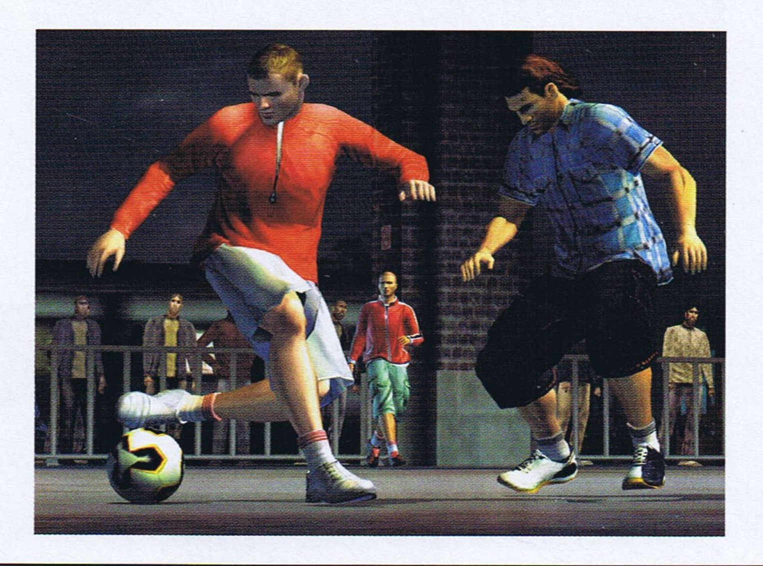
MAXIMUM STATS
At the main menu, hold L + Y and press Left, Left, Left, Up, Down, Down.

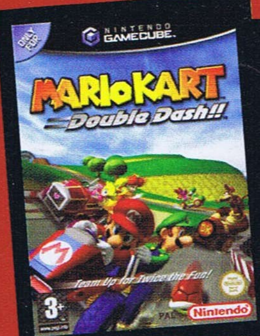
ALL CLOTHES
At the main menu, hold L + Y and press Up, Up, Left, Up, Up, Up, Down, Left .

ALL CLOTHES AND FOOTWEAR
At the main menu, hold L + Y and press Right, Right, Left, Up, Up, Up, Down and Left.

MINI-PLAYERS
While the game is paused, hold L + Y and press Up, Left, Down, Down, Right, Down, Up, Left.

NORMAL SIZE PLAYERS
While the game is paused, hold L + Y and press Right, Right, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left.





READERS' TOP TEN TIPS

Can you out-tip Tips Extra? Send in your hint-tastic helps and we'll 'sort out' the top tipster with a mystery prize from Geraint's 'special drawer'. Chances are, it'll be a game.



1. RESIDENT EVIL 4

Gattling Goodness

In the castle, when you have to do away with the monk with the gattling gun, let him escape. When you enter the turret room, he'll be operating the gattling gun. Exit the room, return to the main hall with the merchant and save your game. When you return, the monk will be weaponless!
Martin Rudman, Ipswich

2. RESIDENT EVIL 4

Ashley's Hidden Goodies

When you've completed the Ashley section, retrace your steps to the area before the room with the painting. Take the alternative route and you will find a locked door with a hole in the wall above it. Give Ashley a piggyback so that she can unlock the door. Inside there are several treasure chests.
Ben Lawrence, Hextable

3. DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT

Pigs, Bananas and Cannons

On the first battlefield-style level, there's a pig cannon near to the entrance of the first building. If you clap near it, you can use it to fire at the other cannons.
Ruth Hanslope, Leighton-Buzzard

4. MARIO POWER TENNIS

Random Selection

There's a little known random selection button; all you have to do is press X on the selection screens.
Harry Winchester, Wigan

5. STARFOX ASSAULT

Blast From the Past

When you're fighting the satellite with the Pigma cannon, if you look very carefully, you can see Sector Y from *Lylat Wars* in the distance.
Will Price, Burton-On-Trent

6. TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT

Deer God

Here's a tip for the Mansion of Madness level: when you're fighting the Deerhaunter, hide in the wall where it broke through, you can shoot at it, but it won't be able to lay a finger on you. This makes the battle a lot easier.
Guram Mulduva, Winnersh

7. MARIO PARTY 6

Secret Weapon

On the Word Herd mini-game, if you say the word 'Ukiki' into the microphone, the monkeys at the side of the screen will throw bananas at the other players.
Julia Holiday, Broadstairs

8. METROID PRIME

The Trouble With Metroids

If a Metroid latches on to you, stand next to a wall – it will get dislodged and will explode after a couple of seconds.
Dave Hotchkins, Sheffield

9. SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE

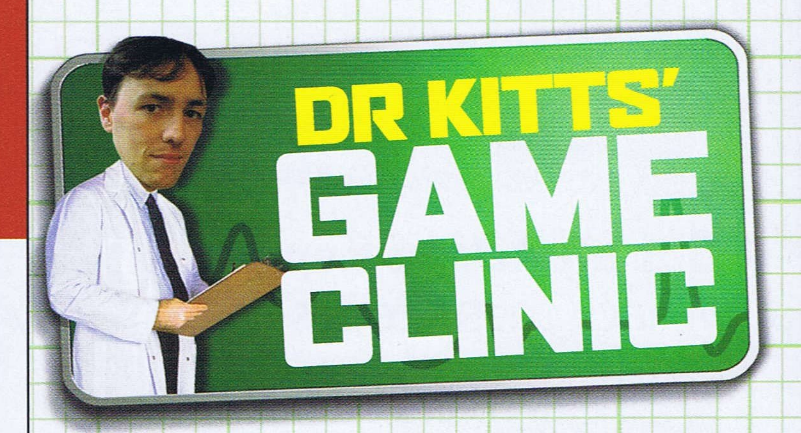
Extendable Fun

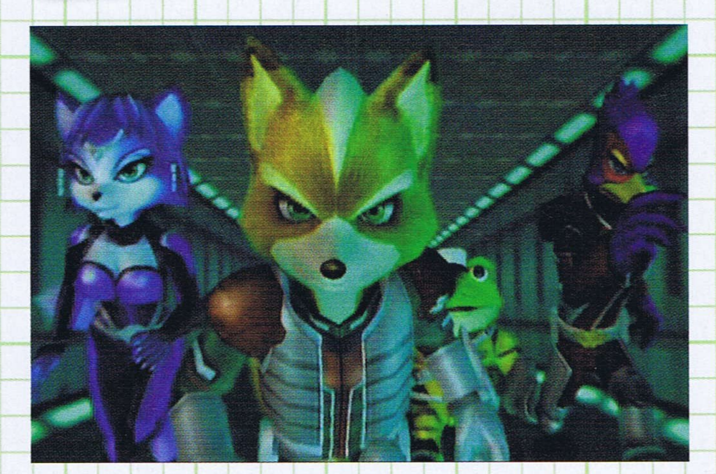
Play as Samus and tap Z to extend the grappling hook, but don't tap it enough to turn the shield on. Rotate the analogue stick anti-clockwise and the grappling hook will extend to three times its normal length.
Jenna McAllerton, Blackburn

10. MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH!!

Mushroom-Mobiles

On the Mushroom City course there are cars shaped like mushrooms. If you crash into them they won't damage you. In fact you'll get a mushroom for your trouble.
Anthony James, Torbay





Dr. Kitts, Dr Kitts, don't mess with him, he'll give you the…

Dr Kitts,
I've been stuck on Krauser on *Resi 4* for a really long time. Whenever I try to defeat him I run out of ammo before I can kill him. Is there an easier or quicker way to dispatch him? Any help would be appreciated; it could probably save some one's life, as I am pretty certain that I'll kill some-one if I don't beat him!
John Lowe, Droitwich

Dr Kitts laughs uncontrollably at the thought that some-one else's life may well be in his hands. *Krauser isn't too difficult to get past, even with no ammo. All you need to do is have the courage to make a go of things with the knife. It only takes around six hits with it to put him down for good. Unfortunately this means that you're going to have to be absolutely spot on with the quicktime events as all of Krauser's attacks are one-hit-one-kill. So one slip up and you're back at the beginning.*

Dr Kitts,
I am stuck on the final boss of *Starfox Assault*. I just don't seem to be able to kill her, I get blown to pieces every single time.
Justin Doggett, Silksworth

Dr Kitts unleashes a horde of ninjas upon all those that have ever opposed him. *The Aparoid Queen isn't that difficult once you've got into the swing of things. She takes on four forms before she actually dies.*

When she's in her first form, you will be able to see a node; you have to get to this. Blast away at it until its armour is depleted, then fire a Nova bomb at the exposed part and lay into it with your lasers until the armour regenerates.

When you've done this, fly past her, turn and repeat the process. Once that form is dealt with, she'll take on her next. A word of warning though, she will attack you constantly while she's in this form.

She will fire blobs of liquid at you, attempt to ram you and, when her head is exposed, try to get you with a breath attack. You need to destroy the four orbs that you can see floating around.

When they're all done, her head will come out. Concentrate your fire on her exposed eye to deplete her health. She will retract her head after a while. When she does, just repeat the process.

This next form will be her last. She has two attacks here. She will shoot cylinder shaped force-fields at you so just fly through these – and she has a Mana beam. This really, really hurts, so avoid it like the plague. Other than that, just concentrate your fire on her head and the Aparoid Queen won't be too long for this world.



Got an Action Replay?

Whack these codes into it…





VIEWTIFUL JOE 2

Master Code
4G0P-JWVQ-VC7NQ
QY55-77BV-2QDX4

Infinite Health
D22A-PRAW-Y7KCU
X7XU-09P8-0J3DE

Always Special
TV6Z-4UWN-T168N
VGBP-X53Y-UXGJ7

Unlimited VFX
9XFX-35JF-W76DT
CRZ3-B884-181V5

BATEN KAITOS

Master Codes
FMRB-T67D-4JH62
2F5M-60CE-QJQHH

Infinite Money
HJ2F-J628-T3YH5
BXVA-2WG6-FE76Q

Save Anywhere
1C9Y-9CM2-FN6PR
U2Q9-N8EW-CYUDR

Get All Magnuses
35M3-GTN9-XCYPM
5PRZ-DH24-ANEX2

Get All Characters
6EP5-WTMH-T4T7M
QHZJ-0UPH-X7KNY
J1Q8-GPZJ-RY2CF
XH4X-5YP3-W86RJ

STARFOX ASSAULT

Master Codes
BKA3-E2NV-X2Q90
GRAG-Y5CQ-74846

Unlock Missions (use a blank save, Single mode only)
UJ9Y-GZE1-7N19A
Q56E-2WW0-TFYCE
CJDV-090M-WB29J
GA2P-BC15-FXJM4
0CAH-7CVN-BH0AT

CODES FOR FLYING MISSIONS ONLY

Infinite Health
577H-M11V-4YBFF
UNXR-UVC5-2XHHV

Infinite Lives
77KP-D3Q1-AX2UH

Infinite Bombs
PYR7-WMRU-DAQ0T
R97Z-MDAZ-8NFU8
UQU2-8DQ3-VYHC2

Instant Power Refill
YEBY-FV0H-PTC1U
AURR-XUT9-VFWRY



CODES FOR VERSUS MODE ONLY

Unlock Maps
H1HB-QK4U-X44QE
DWMN-F80X-FA152

Unlock Peppy Hare
QCKT-F38P-KBDFZ
4Q34-VYF3-HP35G

Unlock Star Wolf
9XZ9-FN83-RWW4H
TV6J-BE5C-6BRTE



Unlock Xevious
W219-GGZR-Q6BQZ
RP2U-DD0F-VRZ5M



YOUR TOP TIPS SHARE THE KNOWLEDGE AND BAG YOURSELF A PRIZE…

Found an interesting tip, secret or quirk in one of your games? Send it into us immediately! Each month we'll stick the best into our Readers' Tips section. If yours is the number one readers' tip, we'll send you a cool prize. Good, huh? Just don't send us cheat codes from the 'net…

HERE'S MY TOP TIP…

IT'S FOR

____

AND THIS IS HOW IT WORKS

____

Name ....

....

Address ....

....

....

.... **Postcode** ....

Send to:
TIPS EXTRA, **NGC**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW
or e-mail ngc@futurenet.co.uk

If you don't want to cut up your magazine, send a photocopy or scribble your entry on a piece of paper and then send it to us. Or just buy two copies of the mag. That way you can keep a spare copy in the khazi. You know, to help focus your mind.



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SKILL CLUB 2005

Take your gaming to the next level…



elcome to the new and improved **NGC** Skill Club 2005. As well as the usual challenges and rules, we now have a top ten leaderboard, hints and tips on the toughest challenges and we bring you the very best of the very best. Marvel at the gaming prowess of people who must have dedicated their lives to completing games at mach 10. They really have to be seen to be believed. But despite these additions, it's still the same classic format: challenges forged from granite and clad in steel for your pleasure and determination.

How It Works

We've conjured up 20 tricky challenges, and you can tackle any or all of them that you like. If you complete three, you'll gain a place in the Bronze league; complete seven, and you'll be honoured with a place in the Silver league. Ten challenges completed means that you'll be entered into the Gold league, and a mighty 14 proves that you're the best of the best and are worthy of entry to the Platinum league. You'll get a certificate for each league that you place in, and if you somehow manage to beat all 20 challenges you'll get a special Skill Club Guru award and certificate, plus something nice that we've got lying around. So what are you waiting for?

THE RULES

- **Three completed challenges earn a Bronze placing; seven a Silver, 10 a Gold and 14 a Platinum.**
- **You can enter any challenges you like.**
- **Each challenge must be accompanied by either the photographic or videotaped proof that is requested.**
- **Use of cheat codes, Action Replays and the like is strictly prohibited – cheaters will be subjected to ritual humiliation for all to see.**
- **You are allowed to submit extra challenges at a later date to increase your standing – you don't have to do them all at once.**
- **There are only 18 challenges here – we'll be adding two more over the coming months to take advantage of games such as *Killer 7* and *Geist*.**
- **If you want your proof back, please include a stamped, addressed envelope.**

● **NGC** would like to offer a thousand thanks to the following members of the Games Radar forums for their contributions to Skill Club 2005: Pell, Rex_McGee, TS2Master, tnman, LewisVoigtlanderFord, Andrew Mills, Drumstick, Plasticcoated, Thanatos, Vyper, Lenty, sntaa, Adam Pollard, and Falcon. Cheers!

NGC SKILL CLUB ENTRY FORM



Hello there, completed enough challenges to earn a certificate? Tick them off here and send your completed form and video/photo proof to:
Skill Club 2005,
NGC Magazine,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath,
BA1 2BW

	A *F-Zero GX*		**K** *Tales of Symphonia*
	B *Super Smash Bros. Melee*		**L** *Freedom Fighters*
	C *Pikmin 2*		**M** *The Legend of Zelda The Wind Waker*
	D *Soul Calibur*		**N** *Timesplitters 2*
	E *Metroid Prime 2 Echoes*		**O** *Eternal Darkness*
	F *Resident Evil*		**P** *DK: Jungle Beat*
	G *Spider-Man 2*		**Q** *Resident Evil 4*
	H *1080° Snowboarding*		**R** *Timesplitters Future Perfect*
	I *Donkey Konga*		**S** *TBA*
	J *Rogue Squadron 2 Rogue Leader*		**T** *TBA*

Please send my certificate to:

NAME:..

ADDRESS:..

....

....

....

....

Use a photocopy of this form or copy it down onto a piece of paper if you'd rather not cut your copy of **NGC** Magazine.

Challenge A — *F-Zero GX*

What You Must Do: Beat all the staff ghosts.
Proof: A photo or video of your times.



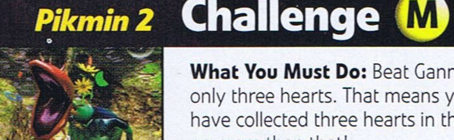
Challenge B — *Super Smash Bros. Melee*

What You Must Do: Get a total time of under 3 minutes 50 seconds for 100-man melee.
Proof: A photo of the screen showing the total time spent.



Challenge C — *Pikmin 2*

What You Must Do: Complete the game in a mere 10 days with all 201 pieces of treasure found. There's literally no room for error here.
Proof: A photo of the stats screen showing how much treasure you've collected.



Challenge D — *Soul Calibur 2*

What You Must Do: With Mitsurugi and the Damascus Sword (which can't block attacks), complete 15 battles on Standard Extra Survival mode. Oh yes.
Proof: A video of your performance.

Challenge E — *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes*



What You Must Do: Complete it with 22% items – no missiles, energy, dark/light beam expansions, bombs or beam special weapons.
Proof: A photo of the ending stats screen with 22% items clearly visible.

Challenge F — *Resident Evil*



What You Must Do: Complete the game in under two hours with Jill. A nice speed run that keeps it tight, but certainly not impossible as it just requires a reasonably efficient route.
Proof: A photo of your time.

Challenge G — *Spider-Man 2*



What You Must Do: Find every single token. Secret, Hideout, Skyscraper… all of them!
Proof: Photos or video of the relevant stats.

Challenge H — *1080° Snowboarding*

What You Must Do: Beat 1'22"00 on Ride Easy Railways – Trestle Trouble, the toughest track in the game. Any character/board combo can be used except for the Rocket Board.
Proof: A photo of your time.



Challenge I — *Donkey Konga*



What You Must Do: Combo the entire song Don't Stop Me Now on Gorilla mode. Yipes! Great and OK notes are allowed, but you can't lose your combo from the first note.
Proof: A photo of the end-of-song screen.

Challenge J — *Rogue Squadron 2 Rogue Leader*



What You Must Do: Get Gold medals on all levels, including the secret levels.
Proof: Photos or video of every medal.



Challenge K — *Tales of Symphonia*

What You Must do: Rack up an 85+ combo. Unison Attacks are key here.
Proof: A photo of the post-battle statistics screen – which you get after you emerge victorious from a fight.



Challenge L — *Freedom Fighters*

What You Must Do: On Freedom Fighters mode, complete the last level (Fort Jay) without using a single recruit.
Proof: A video of the hoisted flag, skipping the credits and showing Normal difficulty complete.



Challenge M — *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*

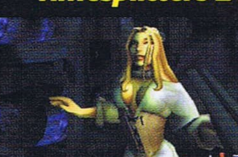
What You Must Do: Beat Gannondorf with only three hearts. That means you can only have collected three hearts in the entire game – no more than that!
Proof: A video of your performance.





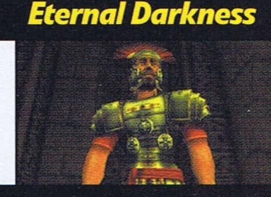
Challenge N — *Timesplitters 2*

What You Must Do: Get 56 Arcade awards.
Proof: A video of you scrolling down the list of 56 Arcade awards.



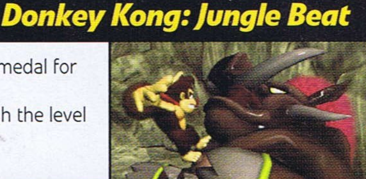
Challenge O — *Eternal Darkness*

What you Must Do: Complete the game three times, once with each artifact.
Proof: A photo showing that Eternal mode is available to select.



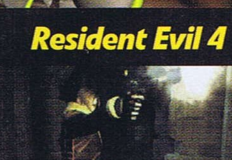
Challenge P — *Donkey Kong: Jungle Beat*

What You Must Do: Get a Platinum medal for every single level.
Proof: A short video, scrolling through the level select screen, showing the awards.



Challenge Q — *Resident Evil 4*

What You Must Do: Complete the game with a 90% hit ratio.
Proof: A photo of the end of game statistics. You are not allowed to use a cleared game file for this challenge.



Challenge R — *Timesplitters: FP*

What You Must Do: Complete the whole game on Story mode in a total time of under 1 hour 55 minutes – good luck.
Proof: A short video of your times from the statistics screen in player progress.



Challenge S — *TBA*

What You Must Do: TBA.
Proof: TBA



Challenge T — *TBA*

What You Must Do: TBA.
Proof: TBA



SKILL CLUB 2005 THE LEADER BOARD

Do you think you've got what it takes to get on the board? Then get playing.



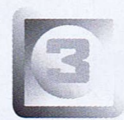
PLATINUM: JAMIE HOBBS, KINGS LYNN

F-Zero GX, Super Smash Bros. Melee, Pikmin 2, Soul Calibur, Metroid Prime 2: Echoes, Resident Evil, 1080° Snowboarding, Donkey Konga, Tales of Symphonia, The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker, Timesplitters 2, Eternal Darkness, Donkey Kong: Jungle Beat, Resident Evil 4.



SILVER: MATTHEW PELLETT, DURHAM

Super Smash Bros. Melee, Soul Calibur, Metroid Prime 2: Echoes, Spider-Man 2, Donkey Konga, Freedom Fighters, The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker, Eternal Darkness.



SILVER: PHILIP MCNAIR, PORTUGAL

Super Smash Bros. Melee, Soul Calibur, Metroid Prime 2: Echoes, Donkey Konga, The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker, Timesplitters 2, Donkey Kong: Jungle Beat.



BRONZE: ANTHONY RYAN, MULLINGER

Spider-Man 2, Rogue Squadron 2: Rogue Leader, The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker, Eternal Darkness, Donkey Kong: Jungle Beat.



BRONZE: STEPHEN LANER, STOKE

Soul Calibur, The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker, Eternal Darkness.



BRONZE: MARK STEVENS, WEXFORD

Soul Calibur, The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker, Eternal Darkness.



BRONZE: KRISTIAN ROANIEWICZ

The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker, Resident Evil, Eternal Darkness.



BRONZE: JONATHAN HUGHES, CHESTER

Resident Evil, Tales of Symphonia, Resident Evil 4.



BRONZE: CHRIS RICHARDS, PONTYPRIDD

Spider-Man 2, Pikmin 2, Resident Evil 4.



BRONZE: SHANKER VARMA, SLOUGH

Rogue Squadron 2: Rogue Leader, The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker, Soul Calibur.



CLUBBER'S GUIDES

Get help from the good, the great and the better.

Super Smash Bros. Melee – by Quijo
Are you having trouble getting a decent time with Jigglypuff? His regular attack may be a little bit too weak, but throwing is the way to go.

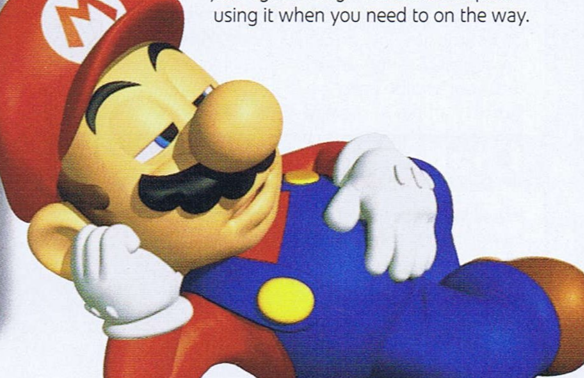
Pikmin 2 – by Rex_McGee
Save time transporting items back to the ship by getting as many Pikmin as possible to take them. Instead of loading them up one at a time, use the C-stick to add them all together.

1080° Snowboarding – by Drumstick
Ricky Winterborn is the man to go for as his jumping skills make him able to catch more than enough air.

Rogue Squadron 2: Rouge Leader – by Konga_Ford
If the X-Wing is a little too tough to handle then why not switch to the Naboo Starfighter? It doesn't have the S-foils, it's faster and the shields seem a bit tougher.

The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker – by Dalagonash
When escaping from Hyrule Castle, remember that the enemies can hurt each other. If you can keep your distance, they will follow you around and will injure their friends. As for the Moblins, the boomerang is ideal for dealing with them.

Eternal Darkness – by Bubble_Lord
Keep you sanity meter as high as possible by stabbing every single monster that you kill. However, once you have collected the Heal spell then you can just leg it through the entire chapter, using it when you need to on the way.



SKILL CLUB HARDCORE

Because some people don't need an engine to go 100 miles an hour.

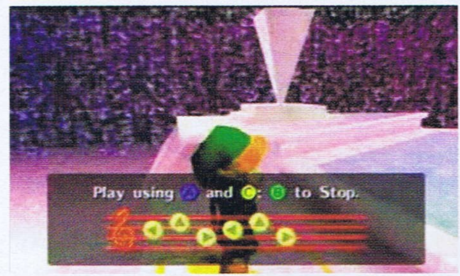


eeling a little chuffed with yourself for unlocking all the characters in *Resi 4*'s Mercenaries mode? So you should be. But don't pat yourself on the back for too long, you'll get cramp. Besides, there are gamers out there who take gaming to an extreme, aiming for world record performances with insane speed runs and other skillful tricks. These people don't so much deserve a pat on the back as the keys to Roald Dahl's Chocolate Factory. Check out www.archive.org/details/speed_runs to wow yourself green with envy, or red with determination to better everyone else's efforts. If you do fancy pulling off some extreme gameage, then please tape it and send it along to us. The address is at the bottom of the page, folks.

ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME

By: Mike Damiani
What? Completed
How fast? 5 hours, 25 minutes

Remember that cosy, marvellous fortnight back in December 1998 when you bought this and savoured one of the greatest gaming experiences in history? Well, imagine condensing that time into five and half hours of demented precision play. Or just watch Mike's speed run to see how it's done.







METROID PRIME

By: Kip
What? Completed on Normal mode
How fast? 1 hour, 5 minutes

If you had trouble tackling some of *Metroid Prime*'s bosses, then you'd best look away now. Using a variety of tricks and shortcuts, you can complete it in just over an hour. Don't believe us? Then allow us to present you with the proof. But it's just not the same at that speed. That's our excuse, anyway.







RESIDENT EVIL 4

By: Phil Majkrzak
What? Completed
How fast? 3 hours, 9 minutes, 56 seconds

What better game to attempt a speed run on than one of the best in recent memory? Again, it can be done in the time stated above and here is the evidence. You'll need the reflexes of a pit-stop crew to swap between the game discs when you move on to the second half of this tremendous horror game.









Put your gaming where your mouth is...

Have you put Salazar in his place in record time in *Resi 4*? Maybe you've managed to find a strategy in *Timesplitters: Future Perfect* that's so cunning the world would implode if you told us. If so, show us your stuff and we'll expose your brilliance to the world (we'll risk the world imploding. It's for a good cause.) And we're not just after speed runs – any quirky tricks or devious strategies in any game are welcome.

You can tape your exploits however you like. As well as the traditional VHS route, you'll find plenty of ways with a PC. Just do a Google search and you should be able to find a way to capture a video of your efforts. To submit some footage of yourself breaking a game in half through sheer skill alone, send your tapes/discs/links to the address below.

Email: ngc@futurenet.co.uk

Post: Skill Club Hardcore,
NGC,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath,
BA1 2BW.

30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW

MAILBOX

EMAIL US!
Got something to say? Run out of stamps? Guards won't let you near a pen? Then log on to the interweb and 'get' us 'at'...
NGC@futurenet.co.uk
Include your name and address so we know who to credit the letter to. Do it! Do it! Do it now!

STAR LETTER

If you send us the best letter of the month, you'll receive a shiny new Gamecube game from our bulging sack of shiny new Gamecube games. Nice.

"Out of stock"

Why the hell did Nintendo take over the publishing and marketing for *Resi 4*, despite having the 'small' matter of the DS launch on the exact same day? I saw the advertising blitz that Capcom made in the US, and the great sales of *Resi 4* that followed were well deserved. Lo and behold, Nintendo managed to screw up *Resi 4*'s European launch, with the only visible advertising being on the little-watched Sci-Fi Channel.

The UK's largest games retailer didn't even have any posters of *Resi 4* in its stores and ran out of stock on the first day. The end result was *Resi 4* scraping into the Top Five on release and disappearing from the Top 10 the following week. I really despair at Nintendo of Europe sometimes. They have one of the contenders for the game of the generation and they don't tell anyone about it. I reckon it's time NoE brought in someone like 'kick ass' Reggie as their marketing head.
Tony Pang, Orpington

***To be fair to Nintendo's marketing people, the early shortage of* Resi 4 *wasn't their fault. Retailers simply weren't interested in buying large quantities of stock for a console that many had long since consigned to the smallest, darkest corner of the shop. And because of that, spending even more money on advertising wasn't going to help sell any more copies of the game – most of them vanished on day one anyway. At least the initial supply problems have been fixed and* Resi 4 *is widely available in games stores now.* Ed**

"Freaky toad"

There's something that has been bothering me lately. It's not that Gamecube isn't doing so well, nor is it that I banged my head on my bedroom door because the Pox of Mox challenge in *TS3* is so bloody hard. It's because you keep taking the mick out of that freaky toad, Slippy. What's wrong with him? He's a bit of a weirdo, yes, but it's like you have a weird obsession about him wanting to get jiggy with Peppy. How can a toad and a hare do it? It isn't like you take the mick out of Mario for his high-pitched voice (no offence, Mazza). All I'm saying is that there's nothing wrong with Slippy. Just make sure you keep taking the mick out of Tingle (the green-clothed little b$£*?#d).
Danny Mingay, Norwich

***We're not trying to make fun of anybody's adolescent crush, but there must be some reason why Peppy has never revealed the existence of his 115 wives and 2,250 children to his Starfox colleagues.* Ed**

Bonus Letters

Would it be possible for you to send me a poster of Mario, preferably in a tight suit or hugging Luigi (or any of his good buddies). I think it would really brighten up my room and I would think of it as a personal favour, also if possible may I have a pencil engraved with the words Mario or NGC? Thank you.
Peter Davies, Wrexham
***No problem. How about the moon on a frickin' stick while you've got my attention?* Ed**

I've got *TS3*, and it owns, and so too should its score.
Josiah Mainwaring, Mynydd Isa
***Don't you mean 'pwns'?* Ed**

Between getting *Resi 4* and a DS, the excitement has been too much, and I've shat myself.
Danny Rafferty, via email
***It happens to the best of us.* Ed**

If we all persuaded one friend to buy a Nintendo product the world would be a better place, for entertainment's sake at least.
Mark Chapman, via email
***Good idea, but you're excused – having already done your bit for entertainment by wasting John Lennon.* Ed**

"Much fun"

As I get older I have more money than I did back in the SNES days, but very little time to play games. So when I'm choosing a game I read a lot of reviews before buying. One recently grabbed my attention – *Resident Evil 4*, which has scored around 97% in many magazines. After reading your review it convinced me to buy the game, as anything that can stand alongside Zelda and Mario must be good. So after work I went out to grab a copy and spent the whole Easter weekend playing it. What can I say? It's been a long time since I had this much fun with a game. I hope Nintendo take note and do the same thing with the new Zelda.
Tai Li, via email

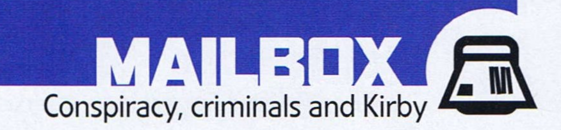
***I'm all for giving Link a shotgun and throwing a few hundred dead-eyed Spanish peasants into the mix.* Ed**

"DOL-021"

A few months back, you talked about the alleged designs for the so-called Nintendo 21. I noticed that some bits looked fairly similar to the Gamecube, especially the cube-shaped logo. In fact, I have reason to believe that this was actually an original plan for the Gamecube, or something based very heavily on it. Pick up your Donkey Konga bongo drums and flip them over so that you're looking at the side opposite the start button. Now, if you look just under the Gamecube logo, it says 'DOL-021'. As we all know, Dolphin was the development name for the Gamecube, and the 21 has been talked about. So basically, this is what we have – the name hints at the Gamecube.
Nick Chambers, via email

***Interesting theory. And when I say 'interesting' I actually mean 'utterly wrong'. Every Gamecube peripheral uses one of those code numbers – the* Mario Party 6 *microphone has DOL-022 stamped into it. Conspiracy!* Ed**

HONOURABLE MENTIONS
Thanks to everyone who wrote in, including (but not limited to): Mark Winchester, Eastleigh; John Coxon, via email; Vergil Caim, via email; Becky Cornes, via email; Jack Tiffin, Loughborough; James Cook, via email; Miles Galloway, Northamptonshire; Jon Price, Exeter; Tony Southion, London; Rory Glynn, Ireland; Chris George, Perthshire; Paul Roscoe, Adlington; Craig Collins, via email; Alex Ford, London; Hector Stanley, Woking; Lewis Miller, via email; Jamie Pritchard, via email; Keiron Tague, Co. Durham; Alex Hudson, Ashby de la Zouch; Richard Thompson, Paisley; Dominic Egan, Leigh-on-Sea; David Heslop, Middlesbrough;



MAILBOX

Conspiracy, criminals and Kirby



"Pink and just"

I recently bought *Kirby's Air Ride* for £12.99 and was pleasantly surprised to find a deep and original racer. You, however, said it was dull and repetitive. What's so bad about it? Okay, so the racing is on rails at times, but the varied machines, checklist goals, unlockables and truly original City Trial mode more than make up for it. Also, Kirby is Kool! He's small, round, pink and, well, just cool.
Simon Gilbert, via email

Countless aeons ago, some trees died and fell to the bottom of the ocean, where God mixed them with dinosaur bones and turned them into oil. Millions of years later, scientists invented a machine for turning that oil into shiny plastic Gamecube discs, which a team of Japanese experts then spent several days filling with* Kirby's Air Ride*. When you think of it like that, £12.99 seems pretty good value. Ed

"Still waiting"

What with the recent re-emergence of your Skill Club thang, I couldn't help but be reminded that I managed to break into your Bronze Club way back in issue 64 and have yet to receive my certificate. I'm still waiting for it, and would appreciate it if you could get around to sending me one. In order to improve my chances of you actually considering my plea for justice, I guess I have to congratulate you on the good work, which you should keep up.
Alex Dudok de Wit, via email

Unfortunately the guy who was in charge of Skill Club back then is serving 15 years following an altercation with the last person who complained about not receiving a certificate. He's due for parole in November, and I'll gladly pass on your details if you like. Alternatively, I can send you a certificate for the current Skill Club, if that's any consolation. Ed

"Dreaded face"

I heard a whisper a while back that a camera would be released for the DS. The scope for fun with such an add-on, along with the microphone and touch-screen, is virtually endless. There could be video conferencing, so you could see who you are playing against on the top screen in WiFi mode. As well as that, those dreaded face-mapping fiascos could be a thing of the past – simply snap a pic, draw around your head with the stylus, and resize it to fit. It could even do photo manipulation using the stylus, like a simplified Photoshop, or you could morph yourself *Mario 64*-style, adding your own surroundings, such as your living room or garden, for backgrounds in specific games, and using the stylus to set boundaries… I could go on, but you get the picture. I want it *now!*
Tony C, Grimsby

They showed a camera called the Game Eye at E3 in 2002, but it was never released. Give us that DS version sharpish, Nintendo. Ed



△ The Nintendo Game Eye – like the Game Boy Camera, except this is probably the only one in existence.

"They abide"

I'm 12 and I really want *Resident Evil 4*; it sounds quality. But my problem is that I'm not legally allowed to get it, which is complete and utter rubbish. My parents won't buy it for me as they abide by the law (why couldn't I have criminals as parents?) and the people in the shop saw through my disguise (I thought fake moustaches worked), so I'm asking for help. How can I get it? Any bright ideas?
Steven Crossley, Bury

Age ratings are there to protect you from things that might shatter your impressionable young mind, so there's no way I could possibly condone shopping online or asking an older-looking friend to buy it for you. Ed



Bonus Letters

Glad to see you killed off Enjiki as of recent. Keep up the good work. I'll still never forgive you for killing good ol' Worldy Bloke.
Mark Nisbet, Galston
Worldy and Enjiki aren't dead. Last I heard, they were living happily in an alleyway near the NGC office, fighting over cans of Special Brew and shrieking abuse at passers-by. Ed

I've thought of a brilliant idea - how about a five-way fight to the death between Diddy Kong, Slippy Toad, Krystal, Prince Tricky and Mr Mime. It would get rid of four unwanted videogame characters and be great entertainment watching them all die.
Jonathan Barron, via email
Excellent. Afterwards, the winner gets drowned in a barrel filled with puréed members of Diddy's extended family. Ed

I wandered around in a daze for several hours thereafter, completely in awe of my unsurpassable game idea. Even now, I simply cannot believe I came up with it.
Michael Burnett, via email
I'm having trouble believing it too. Ed

You are almost as bad as my dad.
David Yarrow, via email
Ooh. Ed

What about Ganondorf? He has very big ears and plans on taking over the world.
Ingvar Gausde, via email
I never noticed that before! Ed

CORRECTION CORNER

Issue 105: the *Super Mario 64 DS* review says 'single cart link: no,' yet in the review it says you only need one for multiplayer games. So am I understanding the term 'single cart link' correctly? Page 61: *Wario Ware Inc* is credited to Konami, where I believe it should say Nintendo *[huge list of further cock-ups, snipped – Ed]*. Keep up the good work.
Elliott Milbourn, via email

You've made a grown man cry. I hope you're pleased with yourself. Ed

In the If You Like This box of the *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory* review on page 67 of issue 106, you recommend *Hitman 2* as an alternative. Why then, did you print another Splinter Cell picture in the box below it?
JP Godfrey, London

Because, erm… I'll get back to you on that one. Ed

Christopher Bloomfield, Southampton; Calum Stannett, Dumfries; Martyn de Weert, Runcorn; Daniel Cooke, Co. Galway; Adam Barsby, Bromley; Ross Fleming, Berwickshire; Gordon Yeung, Cardiff; Sam Bridgett, Farnham; Adam Meredith, via email; Bent Eigil Sumelius, Oslo; Ingvar Gausden, via email; Paul Weedon, Exeter; Jonathan Trier Brikner, Denmark; Michael Tucker, Solihull; Rowan 'completely wrong' Brown, Bath; Lewis Miller, via email; Melissa Wright, London; Eric Brown, Leeds; Francis Filton, via email; Marc Henderson, via email; Jamie C, via email; Clifford Breen, Glasgow; Christopher McCarthy, via email; Jason Sharpe, Milton Keynes; Simon Jones, Oldham; Glenn Martin, London; and many more. Thanks, folks.

CREATIVE CORNER

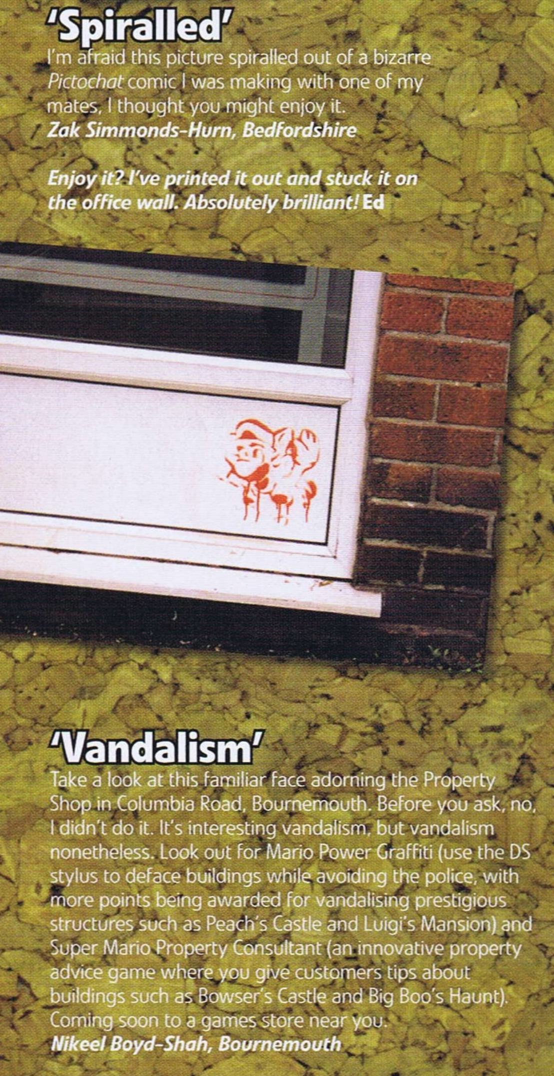
This month's top arts and crafts masterpieces…



'Spiralled'

I'm afraid this picture spiralled out of a bizarre *Pictochat* comic I was making with one of my mates. I thought you might enjoy it.
Zak Simmonds-Hurn, Bedfordshire

***Enjoy it? I've printed it out and stuck it on the office wall. Absolutely brilliant!* Ed**



'Vandalism'

Take a look at this familiar face adorning the Property Shop in Columbia Road, Bournemouth. Before you ask, no, I didn't do it. It's interesting vandalism, but vandalism nonetheless. Look out for Mario Power Graffiti (use the DS stylus to deface buildings while avoiding the police, with more points being awarded for vandalising prestigious structures such as Peach's Castle and Luigi's Mansion) and Super Mario Property Consultant (an innovative property advice game where you give customers tips about buildings such as Bowser's Castle and Big Boo's Haunt). Coming soon to a games store near you.
Nikeel Boyd-Shah, Bournemouth

***You've given me a fabulous idea…* Ed**



"Remade"

In issue 106 you asked which N64 games we'd like to see remade on DS. How about recreating *Banjo-Kazooie*? The top screen could be for the main game and the touch-screen could be similar to *Mario 64*, showing you the jigsaw pieces. Of course the main game you missed was *Ocarina Of Time*. It would be great to play it on the DS, with the top screen being the main game and the bottom used for the inventory. It would enable quick weapon swapping and it could be used for minigames like the fishing one – you could strike and swing the stylus to move the rod.
Andrew Leasley, via email

***A* Banjo *remake might need Microsoft's approval, which probably won't happen, but a spot of Zelda is a must.* Ed**

"Masterful"

You guys probably remember *Cannon Fodder*, the extremely under-appreciated, fast-paced, one-hit-kill adrenaline rollercoaster. How difficult would it be for Nintendo to secure the rights to remake it on the DS? Surely this is the one game that the DS was made for?

The microphone could be used to issue commands or talk to other players (multiplayer or co-op) and the top screen could show equipment and the map. The touch-screen would effortlessly get around the difficulty of the point-and-click control method – holding down L would make your soldiers fire towards the point where the player touches the screen, and holding the D-pad would make them launch a rocket or grenade. It's just an idea, but I'm sure if Nintendo put a team of five on it, it would be a masterful game.
Gabe Harry, via email

***Cannon Fodder DS? Now you're talking my language…* Ed**

"Flashback"

I remember an interview with Miyamoto in N64 magazine some years back where he mentioned the limitations of current display systems – i.e. TVs – and talked about the blueprints for something related to this being drawn up. Could this possibly be Revolution related? Stereoscopic specs? Virtual Boy flashback? And also, what the hell became of Project Cabbage?
Tony C, Grimsby

***That definitely rings a bell. Nintendo's vaults are filled with great ideas that never quite made it to market or have been put on hold until the time is deemed right, so there's every chance that some of Revolution's key concepts have been knocking around for years. The 'sharing and nurturing' game Cabbage, originally destined for the 64DD and Game Boy, was one of those abandoned projects – quietly shelved until the right technology was available, then partially resurrected in the form of* Nintendogs. Ed**

"Spoilers"

Life is a double-edged sword, eh? Not only did you advise me to buy the Game Of The Year (nobody needs to be told what I'm referring to), but you also managed to reveal the game's grand finale to me in full, graphic detail. Surely this cannot be considered entertaining content?

I know you guys; you're not listening to a word of this. As you're reading this, you're probably thinking up some sarcastic comment to reply with, such as 'you shouldn't have looked at the end of the walkthrough,' or 'you should have completed it faster.' Well this is serious stuff. If you don't get this sorted out, you'll be short of one reader pretty soon.

I remember you made an effort to avoid spoilers in the free *Metroid Prime* tips book by concealing the pic of the final boss with a black square. Why not do this again?

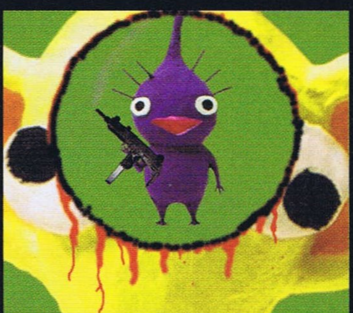
I've had many other games, including *Metroid Prime 2*, ruined for me in the past. If you do this with the upcoming Zelda, I'll strongly consider switching to another publication, regardless of the quality of the rest of the mag. All I ask is that you simply cease including screenshots in your walkthroughs. It's not that hard to do. I'm sure it'll make my life – and other gamers' lives – much, much happier.
Tom Lambert, Bath

I find having screenshots makes the walkthrough a lot easier to follow, particularly if they show exactly what you're

GriNteNdo!

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WRITE TO... GRINTENDO, MAILBOX, NGC, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW OR EMAIL NGC@FUTURENET.CO.UK

supposed to be looking for. Agreed, including multiple shots of the final boss was a bit cruel, but the monkey responsible has been punched soundly in the face – listen closely and you might hear me punching him some more, right now! Woo-hoo! Ed

"Horsepower"

The only thing worrying me is Nintendo's line that horsepower won't be the defining feature when it comes to next-gen consoles. Okay, I want originality and perhaps a revolutionary way to play games, but hell, more power – more allowance when it comes to clean graphics, smoother gameplay and better effects, surely! Wouldn't that allow developers to create games that are far beyond anything that exists now? Look at the use of CGI in movies – as computers become more powerful, anything becomes possible.
Steve Collier, via email

Well, we still don't know exactly how funky Revolution is going to be, but Reggie himself did state that making a very powerful machine is simply the 'price of entry' to the next generation of consoles. For what it's worth, I think Nintendo's policy of keeping a dignified silence regarding tech specs is probably sensible. The N64 was much more powerful than the PlayStation, and Nintendo shouted about it to anybody who'd listen. It didn't make any difference. Going back to the Famicom era and earlier, I can't recall a single round of hardware wars that have been convincingly won by the technically superior machine. Ed

"Hero"

I was playing on my N64 when my cousin (who is about eight years old and gets hyper after eating one chocolate bar) rampaged into my room and stuck a fork into it. Trying to stop him, I was forked twice by this maniac. So, in a last ditch effort, I picked up the N64 controller and stabbed him hard in the ribs with it. As he fell back, winded, I clocked him on the head with the controller and he collapsed, unconscious. I have now witnessed how Nintendo can bring the hero out in people. Namely me.
Hector Stanley, Woking

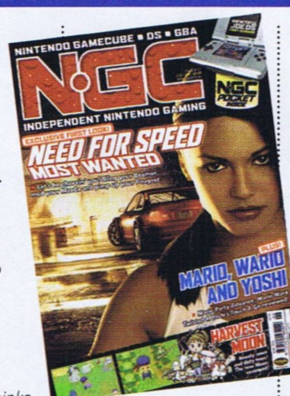
That's quite possibly the most heroic tale I've heard in at least two months. Could I trouble you for an autograph? Ed

SO TELL ME THIS...

Your questions answered by the NGC mutha of think.

Is it possible to get back issues of ***NGC****?*
Greg Rawlins, Maidenhead

Sadly not. To ensure you never miss another issue, take out a subscription (see page 80). It's also cheaper than buying the magazine in the shops.



My idiot brother thinks that Gotcha Force is an amazing game, but in my opinion it is utter crap. Can you please tell me what rating you gave it so that I can shut him up and perhaps move him onto a better game?
Alex Budden, Southampton

It scored 69% in issue 90, with Geraint claiming the game will hold the attention of the younger gamer but simply isn't refined or substantial enough for everyone else.

My Gamecube won't work properly. It won't play the game unless I spend an hour turning the console on and off and opening and closing the lid, otherwise it thinks there's no disc in the drive. This is totally ruining playing on it. Do you guys know of anything I can do to fix it? I want to play Resident Evil 4 and Mario Power Tennis, but the bloody thing won't work, and I've had it for ages so I have don't have a warranty.
Adam Driver, Bury St Edmunds

That's probably because the laser lens has become misaligned. If you've had the console for less than two years then it's still under warranty and you can get it fixed for free. Otherwise, you'll be needing a replacement drive, which will cost you around £32. Either way, you'll need to call the Nintendo Service Centre on 0870 6060247 to book your machine in for a spot of surgery.

OOOPS!

When you pay peanuts, you get art monkeys! Apologies for cutting this letter in half last month, and hefty monkey-bashings all round.

"Pen friend"

My wonderful Japanese pen friend always sends me loads of great gifts and I do likewise with her. It was my birthday a few days ago and she sent me two packages filled with awesome stuff. One of which was a gashapon capsule toy containing a mini gashapon vending machine, complete with mini capsules inside. It really works too!
DJ Fryer, Seaton

Do you use tiny coins to get the capsules out or do you get your mate to distract the security guard while you crowbar it open? Ed



TIMEWARP

A history lesson that's actually interesting

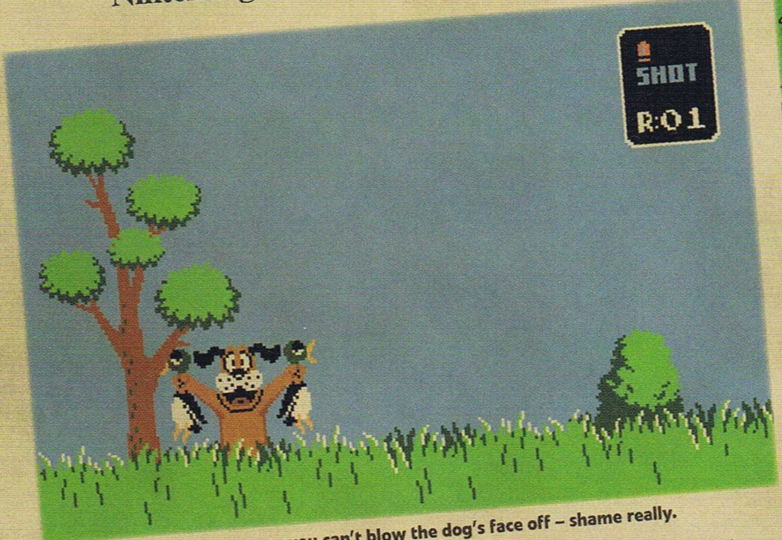


THE FAMILY TREE

The sordid history of today's bestest games

The Curious Incident of the Dog in Nintendo

This month, in honour of the Japanese release of the DS's brand new cute-'em-up Nintendogs, here are six very good boys from Nintendo's history…



△ Despite the many rumours, you can't blow the dog's face off – shame really.

DUCK HUNT (1985, NES)

The ducks took top *bill*-ing (ha!), but it was the dog that stole the show. *Duck Hunt* is as fondly remembered as fellow 1985 NES launch cart *Super Mario Bros* – and it made an unlikely star of a nameless canine bird-botherer.

It wasn't a 'cute' thing either, even though The Dog With No Name made a sweet, ear-flapping leap into the undergrowth prior to each round of target shooting with the Nintendo Zapper. Just look at the adorable way he'd hold two duck corpses aloft after you'd blown their brains out.

It was the laugh that did it; a toothy chuckle, saved for when you'd completely failed to ruffle a bird's feathers. It prompted endless rumours about ways you could down the dog, and caused a generation to grow up and design at least three internet-based games dedicated to shooting his face off.

Which is why the dog's a retro star; he was given a prime spot on a calendar given away to Japanese Nintendo fans last year, and was spotted in several versions of *Wario Ware*. We reckon this old dog would have no problem learning new tricks – *Duck Hunt* would make a perfect DS game…

MARIO PAINT (1992, SNES)

In many ways our favourite Nintendo dog, Undodog was able to bark away your mistakes in *Mario Paint*. Plus, he'd do a little sneeze if you left him alone for too long. Beat that, *Nintendogs*.

YOSHI'S ISLAND (1995, SNES)

"Poochy Ain't Stupid!" claimed the title of one level, just before you laid eyes on



△ Poochy has no nose. How does he smell…? It's probably best to leave it there.

Poochy: a big, gangling, tongue-lolling mutt, inexplicably missing a nose. Since then, nothing; although search *Mario Kart Double Dash*'s Baby Park track for a brief glimpse of him.

LEGEND OF ZELDA OCARINA OF TIME (1998, N64)

No wonder this game suffered three years of delays, with Shigsy focusing his team on extraneous details like puppies running after Link in Kakariko Village. The dogs like Link; the ears and hair make them think he's one of their own.

JET FORCE GEMINI (2000, N64)

Lupus (Latin for, er, wolf) was one of those rare terriers able to let loose white-hot death on alien ants using lasers mounted on his back and jet around the sky with rocket-paws. Really, there was no stopping Rare whenever they had one of their 'ideas'.

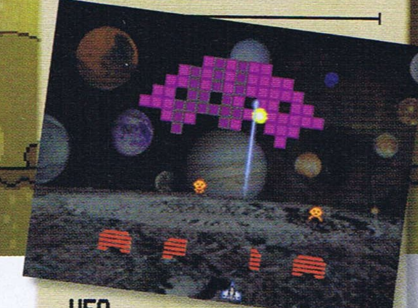
GEIST (OCTOBER 2005, GAMECUBE)

Before we played *Geist* at E3, we could have been forgiven for thinking that the game is about a ghost possessing a bowl of dog food, before moving on to the dog itself. We can now say that there's a little more to it than that.

Gaming Family Trees, A Definitive Guide 1003

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW

News rounded up from the wild world of retrogaming



UFO EXPERT

Rising Star's Nintendo DS game *Space Invaders Revolution* has been developed under the watchful eye of Tomohiro Nishikado – the same person who created the original 1978 arcade machine. "Since 1978, *Space Invaders* has gone through many iterations – some of which have lost the spirit of the original game," Nishikado says. "With *Space Invaders Revolution*, I wanted the team to take the game back to its roots." Expect touch-screen control, 60 levels, multiple cities and some new boss battles.



PLUMB CRAZY

The official *Super Mario World* time record has been toppled again.

Videogame high-score authority Twin Galaxies have reported that Jason Baum of Pennsylvania, USA, slashed the previous record in half – completing the game in one hour and 31 minutes – which will upset anyone who missed several dinners tracking down all the hidden exits in 1992. Jason didn't lose a single life either, so if you feel like chucking the whole videogaming thing in and taking up watercolours, we can't say we blame you.

PIXEL PERFECT

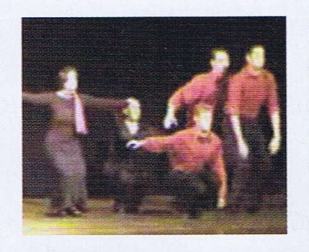


Japanese toy company Tomytec are the latest to hop onto the groaning retrogaming bandwagon, unleashing a series of peg-board mantelpiece novelties (as part of their nasty-sounding 'pumpfactory' range). Available in five varieties, each package comes with 500-or-so coloured pegs that match the colours of a popular game of yesteryear (*Super Mario Bros.*, *Pac-Man*, *Dig Dug* or *Space Invaders*), and a little board to shove them into. Released in June, you can pre-order them from National Console Support at www.ncsx.com.

ODD REALLY!

NINTENDO UNPLUGGED

Tearing across the 'net this month come 'Redefined' – an a capella collective from the University of Wisconsin – with their vocal re-imaginings of Nintendo tunes. There's something embarrassingly pretentious about the singing style and the members running about onstage in a remarkably poor pastiche of NES games, but full marks for effort. The way the host blows into a Nintendo cartridge before kicking off will have people of a certain age laughing far too loudly for their own good. http://www.compfused.com/directlink/734/



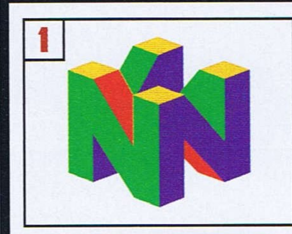
NINTENDO HAUNTS AGAIN

Still wetting the bed after reading about the haunted Nintendo last issue? Then don't go anywhere near the weblog set up by the new owner of the bewitched Nintendo Entertainment System. Not that there's much to be scared of – the story so far involves a very relaxed game of *Super Mario Bros.*, some "odd, intermittent flickering," and a controller with "issues." They're planning to analyse its audio for the unearthly voices that the original owner claimed to hear. Don't blame us if you die seven days after visiting the site, ok? http://hauntednes.blogspot.com



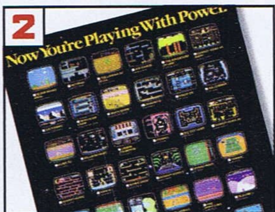
5 THINGS

Nintendo slogans you just don't hear anymore.



1 GET N OR GET OUT

This was a clever N64-era slogan that probably led to its authors getting ousted in favour of people who think that putting glass cubes in Trafalgar Square will sell consoles. Nintendo power-gorilla Reginald Fils-Aime probably wants to resurrect this as "Get out… Just Get Out!!"



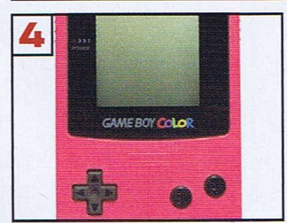
2 NOW YOU'RE PLAYING WITH POWER

Used during the heyday of the original Game Boy: a machine about as powerful as a desk lamp. And with the SNES costing several hundred quid, 'Now You're Playing With Tears In Your Eyes' would have been more accurate.



3 THE NINTENDO DIFFERENCE

The things that make Nintendo different from everything else are things like Shigsy's Beatles hair and the Elixir of Eternal Life and Grumpiness that's fed twice daily to Yamauchi. Oh no, wait – it's the Gamecube handle.



4 PLAY IT LOUD

'Loud' was probably referring to the pastel colours of '80s Game Boy casings, rather than the squeaking, mouse-like speaker that the humble handheld burped and whistled with. To take this slogan literally, you'd have had to put your ear *inside* the actual Game Boy itself.



5 GAMING 24:7

Or 'Waiting 24:7', which is probably more appropriate for an entire continent left without a Gamecube release date for months, while the rest of the world lapped up the goodness of Nintendo's purple gamebox. Will we ever forgive them? Well, yes, we probably will do.

RETRO TAT

Bootleg crackdown: cheap Ninty rip-offs no more!

Get your bootleg NES consoles in while you can; Nintendo and the FBI are going arrest-o-crazy. On 13th April, 40 FBI agents stormed five locations in New York and recovered 60,000 Power Player consoles. They're plug-and-play consoles that pack in as many as 500 NES games, the type you might have seen hawked at a car boot sale or second-hand market near you. Apparently 280,000 systems were distributed in autumn and winter last year, which makes the NES Classics range look very silly indeed.



WRITE IN!

Have you been offered a boxful of 30,000 NES bootlegs by a nervous-looking man on a street corner? Tell us and we'll name and shame him in these very pages. Email ngc@futurenet.co.uk.

THE MAKING OF...

RESIDENT EVIL 4

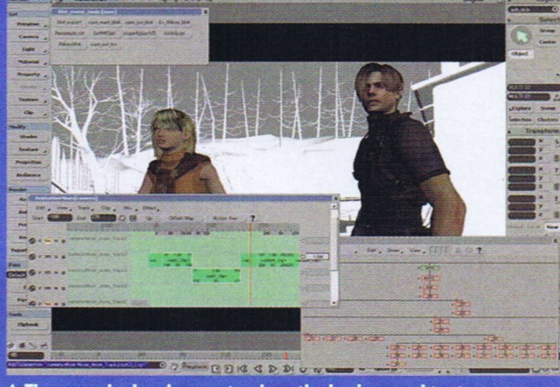


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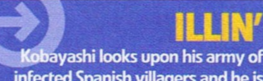




△ It's probably time for a change of underpants, Leon.

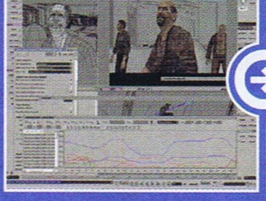


△ The game in development, minus the background textures.



ILLIN'

Kobayashi looks upon his army of infected Spanish villagers and he is pleased. "The Ganados are obviously much more intelligent than any zombies have been in previous Resident Evil titles," he says, "they can now think for themselves."











There's a double meaning to that big scratchy 4 in the game's logo. *Resident Evil 4* isn't just the fourth complete game in Capcom's 24 million-selling series of scare-you-up masterworks – it's also the final attempt at making a game that, during its three years in development at Capcom HQ, was abandoned and restarted from scratch an astonishing three times.

This was all because of the determination of Capcom's R&D4 (Research and Development team four) to do something *new* with Resi – a game that hadn't really changed one bit since it first shuffled and groaned into existence back in 1996.

"It is no secret that the development of *RE4* was not without its difficulties," says *Resident Evil 4* producer Hiroyuki Kobayashi, who spoke to **NGC** in an exclusive interview. "We spent a long time developing the game only to reach a point where we realized this was not the right way to go. We really felt we had to take the game, and therefore the series, in a new direction. So we had to begin the development process all over again. The earlier versions you may have seen were more like the earlier Resident Evil games; the version you have played is a complete reinvention."

The first version, which was up and about around the time that *Resi 4* was officially announced in September 2001, had *Resident Evil 2* hero Leon S. Kennedy creeping around the HQ of the Umbrella Corporation. The second – which we actually saw screenshots of in 2002 – was an *Eternal Darkness*-style psychological horror, with Leon stalked by a bloke with a hook where his hand should be. Number three was your traditional Resi – zombies, shotguns, protruding ribcages, that sort of thing.

Filed by: Mark Green

ANCIENT EVIL



In the second abandoned version of Resi 4 – which was actually unveiled in a 2002 video – it was planned to have Leon travelling "overseas" (Resi 2's director had reportedly been on a research trip to Spain) and actually becoming infected with Umbrella's ubiquitous zombifying T-Virus. It was planned for release in 2004. Even with two complete rewrites, Resi 4 still hit Japan and the US at the turn of 2005, which was an amazing achievement considering the work that had to go into it.

Kobayashi – getting pretty tired of *Resi* after seven years of dogs jumping through windows and zombies eating people's knees – watched the progress of this third version and realised that the team were "not creating the game we should have been." He demanded a change; there were to be no more zombies in Resident Evil.

That was just the start. Kobayashi had something totally fresh in mind – aimed at enrolling a new army of Resident Evil fans who might never have touched the games before. There'd be no Umbrella Corporation, no T-Virus and even the door-opening animations would be killed off. Resident Evil was to be redefined.

The news had to be broken to a team of 60 "unbelievably hard working staff" that had put months into a game that was about to be brutally exterminated for the third time. "It was very hard to motivate the team. I'd say this was the

Publisher: Capcom	Release date: 18th March 05
Developer: Capcom R&D4	Highest Gamecube Pos: 1
	Reviewed: **NGC**/104, 97%

△ Leon's baptism of fire. The game features a ludicrous number of different death scenes.

△ The artwork was done by the same artist who did *Resi 0.*

△ Looking for Flash Gordon?

△ Foppish fun in rural Spain.

△ The exciting devkit perspective.

△ Unsurpassed visuals on Gamecube.

biggest obstacle we faced," says Kobayashi. Nintendo had to be talked around to the idea too – Capcom needed the official nod before creating one of the blood-soakingest games ever to drench a console (headed up by a man who admits that it brings a smile to his face when he watches a player reacting to a chainsaw grinding into the side of Leon's neck).

The focus was on action. The jumps and scares of previous games were cut back, leaving a game so fast-paced that it was almost a shoot-'em-up, while still a Resi game at heart. Leon stayed, but his new melee moves evolved and multiplied until he was something of a Kung Fu fighting machine. The illogical puzzles made a return, but the dialogue choices that featured in early versions were abandoned. Herbs and first aid sprays were in, but the tortuous item-management screens of old were out. Most controversially, the infuriating turn-and-run control scheme was back – and without a strafe control. This was briefly considered but then deliberately left out after R&D4 members started worrying that Resi was turning into Splinter Cell.

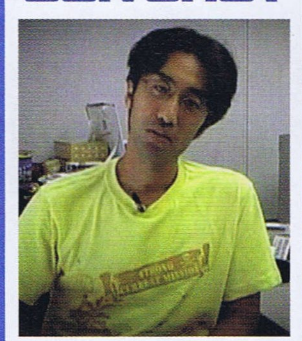
"DEVELOPMENT OF RESIDENT EVIL 4 WAS NOT WITHOUT ITS DIFFICULTIES"

All that dealt with, R&D4 trudged back to square one once again. Kobayashi was making no secret of his mission to conjure up the best Resident Evil yet and he was confident that, following intensive work on the previous Resi remakes, the team knew enough about what makes the Gamecube tick to pull off something special.

It was Capcom director Shinji Mikami – drafted in to replace the original director and staring unnervingly over Kobayashi's shoulder all the way – who really rocked the Resi boat. He had the idea of cropping the screen at the top and bottom to give the game a movie-like atmosphere, and he was also responsible for the over-the-shoulder viewpoint, which meant that the Resident Evil series finally unscrewed its antiquated fixed cameras from the walls.

Kobayashi agreed with this: "We knew we wanted to inject a faster pace into the game. The position of the camera was a crucial factor in us being able to achieve this pace. I feel it adds to the tension and heightens

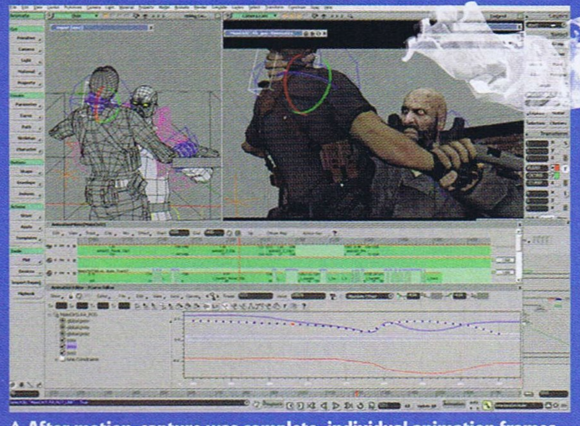
GUN SHOT



In the Making Of documentary that accompanied the Special Edition of Resident Evil 4*, there's a revealing background detail that shows the work that went into getting the game's guns and grenades just right. Behind chief sound designer Yoshihiko Wada, a video is playing that shows a weapons expert firing and reloading pistols in extreme close-up – crucial research material for a Capcom team obsessed with detail.*

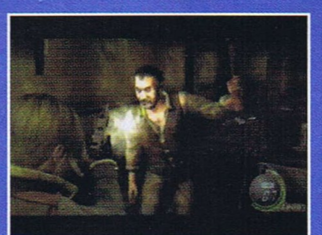
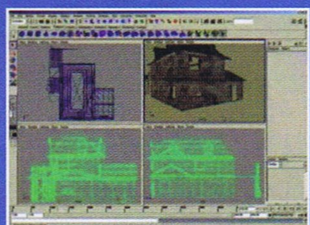
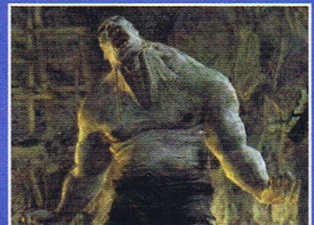


△ The most satisfyingly meaty weapons in any game.


△ After motion-capture was complete, individual animation frames needed tweaking to ensure that fingers didn't pass through necks.

RESIDENT EXPERT

Producer Hiroyuki Kobayashi on how pure evil is made.


1 Kobayashi knew from the outset what the two most important features of *Resi 4* were. "First, the over-the-shoulder camera position and its effect on the gameplay. Second, the pace of the gameplay. It's something we worked very hard on."

2 Documents outlining the design of each area – the village, the castle and the island fortress – were drawn up and had to be approved by top management. Building them was then a process of "huge amounts of design, development and endless meetings."

3 Sound was a key concern. "We felt that changing the sound effects followed the 'redesigning Resi' theme, and we used Dolby to add to the cinematic experience." Enemy voices were the combination of Capcom designers, professional voice artists and animals.

4 Kobayashi couldn't be happier with the terrifying Ganados and friends. "The way you can take the enemies out is something that we're proud of. The different hit zones and the enemies' reactions to taking bullets are my favourite parts of the game."

the sense of action and speed much better than a stationary camera could have done. It was a lot of hard work to develop it, but I think it has paid off on a grand scale."

Elsewhere, barely a single sliver of code from previous Resi games remained. The engine powering edition four was built from scratch for Gamecube. The spectacular lighting was the work of the same artist who'd bathed the *Resident Evil* remake in eerie glows and swinging lamps – and who had a habit of suddenly abandoning his work and starting all over again. Even most of the sounds were new, which made it the first time the majority of the effects weren't reused from the Resi archives.

Then there were the Ganados (the Spanish word for cattle) – infected humans that crowded into the gap left by the abandoned zombies. The meat of development time was spent prodding around in their brains, getting them to work in teams and overcome obstacles left in their path. "This was a challenging part of the development process." admits Kobayashi, "I think we did okay though, don't you?"

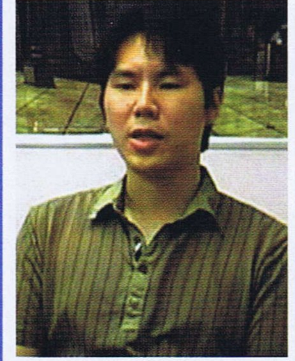
Leon ended up with some pretty impressive weapons himself; all the better to fight back against those brainy Ganados. The over-the-top, knock-'em-flying power of weapons like the shotgun was one of the big surprises for journalists invited for a peek at the new *Resi 4* in February 2004. Kobayashi says "a hell of a lot of research" went into the weapons.

"In fact, over the course of the three years development time, weapons were a constant source of debate. We wanted to remain true to the Resident Evil experience, so we included the usual handgun and shotgun, but then added the upgradeability and new weapons,

"WE'RE ALL REALLY PLEASED THAT RESI 4 HAS BEEN RECEIVED SO WELL"

Were there any ideas for enemies that didn't make it into the completed game? Kobayashi's response: "Not really. In fact, we never even planned to put as many enemies in as there are! Somewhere along the way we thought of several new enemies and they got rolled into the final game. Before we knew it, we even had chainsaw-wielding masked Ganados in there."

HORRIBLY GOOD



Kobayashi's favourite Resident Evil 4 *moment? "If I had to pinpoint one specific moment, it would probably be the first time Las Plagas (the game's parasitic insect horror) appears after the lake. But overall, it has to be the new direction in which we have taken the game. More specifically, I would say the new camera system and the enemy intelligence."*



△ By any standards these are high-poly models – hence the impressive facial detail.

△ Stretching a facial skin over the polygon mesh.

△ Leon gets his throat cut again. Without the magic of memory cards, he might never have finished a single mission.

which we feel significantly add to the gameplay. The inclusion of the shopping system and salesman is also something that we feel works particularly well."

Kobayashi can talk all he wants about how well *Resi 4* works and how he'll take Resi in any direction he likes because he believes the series is based more on story than horror. In reality, R&D4 believed they'd got that Resi atmosphere right ("fear and uncertainty," as Kobayashi puts it) – but fingernails must have been strewn around the floor of Capcom's offices as they waited to see how long-term series obsessives and hardcore gamers would react to Resi's new look.

The work paid off as 200,000 copies of *Resident Evil 4* were sold in the game's first month on sale in Europe alone, and an estimated million had been shifted worldwide by late April.

"The feeling is generally upbeat," Kobayashi told us. "It is sky high at the moment as we're all really pleased that *Resi 4* has been received so well. I started work on the game at the end of 2001, and had a turbulent yet fulfilling three years producing it. I am extremely proud of the finished article."

With the promise that *Resi 5* will pick up where number four left off, Kobayashi tells us there'll be plenty more reasons to hide behind the sofa: "There's so much talent in the team, I don't think they could ever run out of new and exciting ideas. On the contrary, we have had to edit out so many things you wouldn't believe it!"

END GAME

Just like the proverbial wicked, there's to be no rest for Hiroyuki Kobayashi. According to our friends at Capcom, he celebrated putting the finishing touches to Resi 4 *by cracking straight on with his duties with* Killer 7*. He's obviously a man who enjoys his work. Which all bodes very well for its imminent release – there's nothing quite like a man transformed into a shambling zombie through never-ending work sprinkling some magic into an upcoming game. This might have something to do with why* Killer 7 *looks so damned odd.*



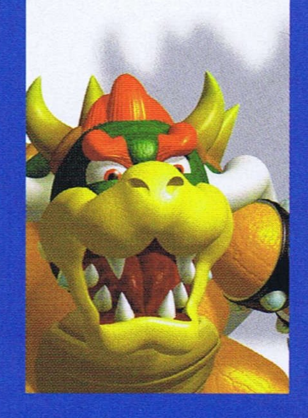




Your up-to-date guide to the hottest PAL titles.

Games aren't cheap. Even when you buy pre-owned games, it's still a bit gutting to get your bargain treasure home and find you've splashed out on a box of gaming garbage. Hence this buyer's guide – it's got:

- **The 100 top-scoring games, listed in score order so you can begin with the very best.**
- **We tell you which issue it was reviewed in, so if you want to know more you can look through your back issues. You *do* have them, don't you...?**
- **A brief description of the game, so if you don't have that issue you can find out the most important points about it.**
- **Highlighted games, with a little more detail. As games join the list, the highlights will change!**



1 RESIDENT EVIL 4 — 97

CAPCOM ■ NGC/104

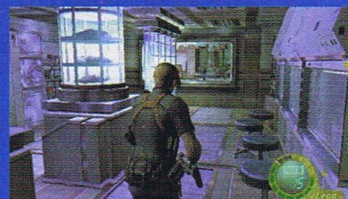
What, no zombies? What's going on? Something spectacular – that's what. This instalment takes the *Resi* series to the next level with an unprecedented level of innovation. Gone are the three day long animations of doors opening and in comes this new, far more dynamic game.

NGC STAR GAME









2 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA THE WIND WAKER — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/81

The babbling of the internet whingers faded to a stunned silence when this hit the shelves. It's as exquisitely fashioned as a Disney feature film and doesn't lose any of the gameplay for it. Some sailing sections spoil it a bit, but this is as close to art as games have got.

NGC STAR GAME





3 METROID PRIME — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/76

Looks absolutely incredible and there's no slow down, despite the huge, incredibly detailed environments. The action's varied and the puzzles are mind-bending. One of the finest games you'll ever play.

NGC STAR GAME





4 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE 96

NINTENDO ■ NGC/73

Yet again Mario shows other platform 'heroes' how it's really done – in stunning 3D, with responsive controls and an engaging story (about vandalism and poisonous brown slime). Plus a giant water-filled squirty backpack. You need one of those… *(who writes this nonsense? Ed)*









5 METROID PRIME 2 ECHOES 94

NINTENDO ■ NGC/101

Another outstanding outing for Samus Aran as she switches between dimensions to save the Luminoth from the Ing. The story is enriched by the logs you find, and Samus has useful new weapons and abilities. The landscapes aren't as varied and awe-inspiring as *Prime's*, but that's our only complaint.



6 MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH!! 93

NINTENDO ■ NGC/88

Crazy courses littered with Chain Chomps and pick-up boxes, weapons from slippy bananas to green shells, giant Yoshi eggs, and all your favourite Ninty faces doubling up to race recklessly. The AI's a bit cheaty (a shell *just* as we're about to win? Hmm…) but it's a whole lotta fun.



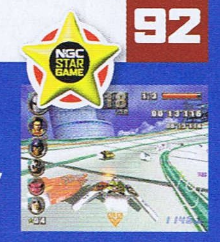




7 F-ZERO GX 92

NINTENDO ■ NGC/85

This is a blisteringly fast racer that manages to keep the pace up without getting frame rate jitters. You will never accept glitchy graphics again. A few more tracks would've been nice, but with editable vehicles (in addition to the 30+ that come with the game) and a Story mode, why complain?



8 PIKMIN 2 92

NINTENDO ■ NGC/99

Louie, Olimar's assistant, has proved less than efficient at managing the business. Happily, it means they've had to return to Earth for a longer session of collecting treasure. They've got two new types of Pikmin to help them out too. Bigger, better and even more enjoyable than the original.







9 SOUL CALIBUR 2 91

NAMCO ■ NGC/85

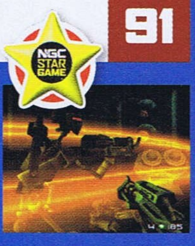
Excellent fast-paced fighting. Weapon Master mode is your key to unlocking the eight hidden characters – but the real star of the show isn't hidden! Namco have dropped in Link for the Gamecube version, complete with bow and arrow. It's the best fighting game on *any* system.

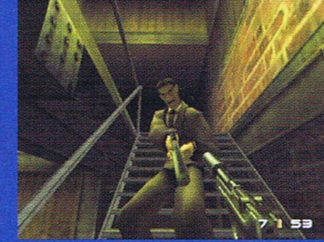


10 TIMESPLITTERS 2 91

EIDOS ■ NGC/73

Travel back through time on the trail of the nefarious 'splitters. This means shooting things. Your weapons are time-zone appropriate and you'll wage war everywhere from the Wild West to the near future. And you will love every minute. The multiplayer's the icing on the cake.





TOP TEN GBA GAMES

1 ADVANCE WARS 1 & 2

Cute-looking turn-based strategy, with a frighteningly addictive, super-challenging core. Honestly, it's better than it sounds. *AW2* is essentially *Advance Wars 1.5*, but it's tweaked to perfection.

2 WARIO WARE

Imagine the simple graphics and gameplay of Game & Watch fired at you in five-second bursts. Loopy fun that you'll keep returning to.



3 MARIO & LUIGI SUPERSTAR SAGA

An RPG with puzzle and platform elements, starring our two top plumbers.



4 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

One of the most memorable outings for Link (alongside *Ocarina of Time*). Comes with bonus *Four Swords* multiplayer adventure.



5 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2

This tweaked version of the SNES classic boasts a massive game world and some of the tightest level design ever.



6 POKÉMON RUBY & SAPPHIRE

The same structure as before – catch 'em all, send 'em into battle – but still the most entertaining RPG out there…



7 MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT

Nicks the best bits from the SNES and N64 versions, and if you've got four friends, GBAs and cables, they can play too.



8 METROID FUSION/ ZERO MISSION

Everything that has ever made *Metroid* great can be found in these two games. A sprawling environment littered with enemies and an imposing difficulty level.



9 HARVEST MOON

A slow burner, *HM: Friends of Mineral Town* is a farming/charming sim to die for. It'll last you for months.



10 STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3

An incredible conversion of one of the best fighters ever. Massive single-player and a brilliant two-player.

11 SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/68

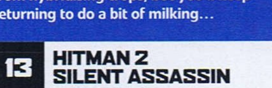
All your Nintendo favourites get together for a phenomenal ruck across a whole range of game worlds. Think Samus could beat Mario? Or that three Jigglypuffs are better than one Link? You'll have massive amounts of fun proving it, by yourself or with friends.



12 HARVEST MOON A WONDERFUL LIFE — 91

UBISOFT ■ NGC/91

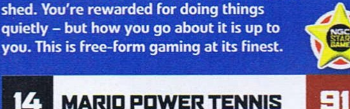
Romance the ladies, keep cows and grow veggies as the seasons change. Despite a new chapter structure, this farm sim loses its way a little when you've got your bride and have few new goals apart from hybridising crops, but you'll keep returning to do a bit of milking…



13 HITMAN 2 SILENT ASSASSIN — 91

EIDOS ■ NGC/82

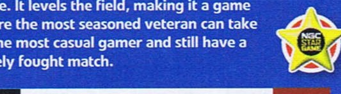
Bald, barcoded assassin 47 comes out of retirement and takes on the bad guys with a range of weapons. Not bad for a bloke who spends his time in a shed. You're rewarded for doing things quietly – but how you go about it is up to you. This is free-form gaming at its finest.



14 MARIO POWER TENNIS — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/104

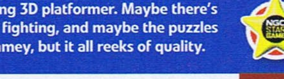
If you stick with it and learn the ins and outs of the power shots, you're left with an incredibly tactical game. It levels the field, making it a game where the most seasoned veteran can take on the most casual gamer and still have a closely fought match.



15 PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME — 91

UBISOFT ■ NGC/90

Ubisoft show other developers how to update classic games without ruining them, as the brilliant 2D platformer gets transformed into an outstanding 3D platformer. Maybe there's too much fighting, and maybe the puzzles are too samey, but it all reeks of quality.



16 PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND-YEAR DOOR — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/100

With Mario's papery ability to fold himself into a paper plane or turn sideways to become nigh-invisible, plus a great fighting mechanism and rippable scenery, this is a brilliant example of Nintendo doing what they do best – making the games only they can make.



17 WAVE RACE BLUE STORM — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/67

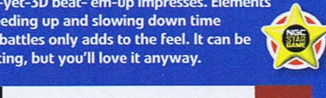
A few tiny frame rate problems hamper the PAL version of this aquatic racer, but it is still a fabulous game. It's convincingly speedy and it looks wonderful – the water effects will leave you staggered. The controls are intuitive and effective. In short, this is absolute magic.



18 VIEWTIFUL JOE — 90

CAPCOM ■ NGC/84

Some people love the unusual looks, some people hate them. Either way, get past the cel shading and this 2D-yet-3D beat-'em-up impresses. Elements like speeding up and slowing down time during battles only adds to the feel. It can be frustrating, but you'll love it anyway.



19 SECOND SIGHT — 90

CODEMASTERS ■ NGC/97

Excellent psychic stealth-'em-up. Who are you? Why are you here? All will be revealed – if you survive. The levels are tightly designed, offering scope for replay, while its distinctive style and original touches make it one of the most memorable games we've played in years.

20



METAL GEAR SOLID THE TWIN SNAKES — 90

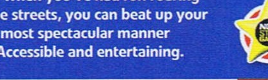
KONAMI ■ NGC/91

This is a superb stealth action adventure with a healthy pedigree. A great story combined with revamped graphics make this old PlayStation title blossom on Gamecube. The voice acting and music are superb. There are some problems – the long cutscenes, it only takes a day to complete and there are too many bosses. We're just picky, though, this is a really, really good game.

21 BURNOUT 2 — 90

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/80

The best realistic racer on Gamecube. It looks great and it's wonderfully fast. Then there are the crashes… When you've had fun roaring around the streets, you can beat up your car in the most spectacular manner possible. Accessible and entertaining.



22 WARIO WARE INC. MEGA PARTY GAMES — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/97

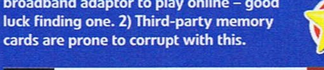
A quickfire succession of hilarious five-second mini-games are blasted at you and up to three friends. With tasks like nose picking, cat poking and banana peeling, it's original, outlandishly quirky and very good fun. This comes thoroughly recommended.



23 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE 1 & 2 — 90

SEGA ■ NGC/78

This online RPG will devour huge chunks of your life. Get ready for lots of menu screens, numbers and bashing crates. Note: 1) you'll need a broadband adaptor to play online – good luck finding one. 2) Third-party memory cards are prone to corrupt with this.

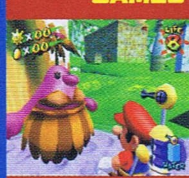


24 1080° AVALANCHE — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/89

More of a racer than a trick-based snowboarder, although jumps, spins and flips are all there. Short courses and a fair bit of pace keep things feeling tight. The time trial modes are the best bits – Gate Trial will have you trying to shave seconds off for months.

TOP FIVE PLATFORM GAMES



SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
This is a tour-de-force of everything that good gaming should be. An absolute delight

PRINCE OF PERSIA THE SANDS OF TIME
An innovative time-rewinding twist and excellent puzzles make this essential.

PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN
Good looking with trickier puzzles and, ahem, more 'mature' content.

LUIGI'S MANSION
Luigi buys a mansion and finds it's haunted. It's a little easy, but you'll enjoy every second.

DONKEY KONG: JUNGLE BEAT
Sheer bongos-for-D-pad brilliance.

TOP FIVE RACING GAMES



MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!
Single-player mode looks as cute as ever, but it's rock hard.

F-ZERO GX
Expertly crafted arcade fun. Really rockets along.

WAVE RACE BLUE STORM
Classic Nintendo action with dazzling water effects.

BURNOUT 2
Fast car racing combined with steel-crunching pile-ups.

EXTREME G 3
The weapons are what make this future racer shine.

25 NBA STREET V3 — 90

EA ■ NGC/104

Think *Space Jam* meets *NBA Jam* meets EA's *NBA Street* and you're pretty much there. For the Gamecube incarnation, EA heaped in a load of Nintendo characters. This is entertaining arcade basketball with all the quirks of Nintendo. What else do you need?



26 ANIMAL CROSSING — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/98

Ever fancied leaving home and living in a town populated by animals? The full cartoon farming experience can now be yours, complete with N64 graphics and strange noises. Somehow it's horribly addictive, as you improve your house, fill the museum and get a life.



27 SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS — 90

SEGA ■ NGC/81

Vast boat-based RPG ported from the Dreamcast. "It'll change your life" our RPG fanatic assures us. The spaces in between the meat of your quest (for some missing moonstones) are stuffed with the usual RPG battling, puzzle solving and shopping, although it looks dated now.



28 CONFLICT DESERT STORM 2 — 90

SCI ■ NGC/86

Set during the first Gulf War, this team-based shooter is better than the original *Conflict Desert Storm*. There's a completely new aspect to this one: you're not allowed to let any of your men die, which leads to all sorts of heroics when you try to save your team.

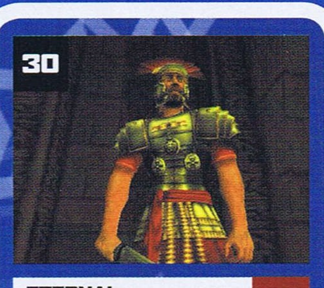


29 WORMS 3D — 90

SEGA ■ NGC/87

You know the score. You have four worms. Your worms must kill other worms. The special weapons are as crazy as ever (Sheep, the Holy Hand Grenade…) The only real difference is that it's now in 3D, which will effect your strategies for the better.

30



ETERNAL DARKNESS — 89

NINTENDO ■ NGC/74

A Lovecraftian horror that sees you playing as a dozen different characters to fight off a dark, shambling evil. As you see more, your sanity meter falls, and when that drops to the bottom… This is a survival horror that spans twenty centuries of history. It's not another *Resi* clone: there's more to it than that. There are a few weaknesses in the combat, but other than that it's very nearly perfect.

31 LEGEND OF ZELDA FOUR SWORDS — 89

NINTENDO ■ NGC/102

This is an obscure *Zelda* game that's pretty hard on the pockets – in multiplayer mode, each of the four players needs a GBA and link cable. Nonetheless, it's great fun, very amusing and would've scored more highly if the best bit of the Japanese version – Tetra's Trackers – had been included.

32 RESIDENT EVIL 89

CAPCOM ■ NGC/72

Compelling survival horror. Play as Jill if you want to take things gently, Chris if you're feeling hardcore. Then immerse yourself in this puzzle-solving, zombie-battling frightfest. There's a bit of backtracking and the puzzles are annoying, but they don't hamper it too much.

33 SPLINTER CELL 89

UBISOFT ■ NGC/81

Only Sam Fisher and his various high-tech gadgets – like sticky bombs and camera disruptors – stand between terrorists and the Free World. The 'three alarms and you're out' rule can become annoying, but it's the usual stealth 'em up stuff, but done with a fair degree of flair and polish.

34 CONFLICT DESERT STORM 89

SCI ■ NGC/80

This is a rare breed: a multi-platform release that is about as far from the 'lazy port' title as you could possibly hope. This version has been fully optimised for the Gamecube. *Conflict Desert Storm* is wicked fun and intensely tactical. The multiplayer is awesome fun as well.

35 SSX 3 89

EA ■ NGC/87

Snowboard around one giant mountain, entering races or showing off tricks. Complete all three peaks and you'll get the chance to spend 15-30 minutes tricking your way down the whole mountain. The frame rate can be glitchy, and it's not quite as free-roaming as it seems at first, but it's a superb game.

36 DONKEY KONGA 88

NINTENDO ■ NGC/99

Drum along to a soundtrack, following the symbols on-screen for left bongo, right bongo, both bongos or clap. It's the sort of game that almost anyone can pick up and play. It's also completely addictive and tremendous fun. Despite the extra bongos costing £20 a set, the multiplayer's worth the expense.

37 PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN 88

UBISOFT ■ NGC/102

The Prince is older and his game's got more 'mature' (so, scantily-clad ladies and smart-arsed comments have been dropped in). It's still great to look at and great to play, with trickier puzzles than the first game, and although the fighting's a bit dodgy, the rest of it more than outweighs that problem.

38 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005 88

EA ■ NGC/98

This is a big game. There are probably lost tribes in there if you play for long enough – but you won't see them if you have other interests, like a job or social life. More ball control, famous opponents, the ability to create your own golfer, 14 courses (11 of them new)… You can't get bigger or better than this.

39 LUIGI'S MANSION 88

NINTENDO ■ NGC/67

The most annoying thing about Luigi's own adventure is that it's TOO SHORT. Apart from that, his escapades in his newly-acquired haunted house play like a combination of *Super Mario World* and Ghostbusters. The man in the green hat has done himself proud with this one.

40 SUPER MONKEY BALL 88

SEGA ■ NGC/67

The first ingenious update of the old classic *Marble Madness*, with encapsulated monkeys rolling around bizarre landscapes collecting bananas. Mini-games include obvious ball games like pool and golf, oddities like a tilting boxing ring and even a monkey version of *Mario Kart*.

TOP FIVE FIGHTING GAMES



SOUL CALIBUR 2
Gorgeous Link-fuelled beat-'em-up from Namco.

SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE
All your favourite Ninty types, pounding each other's faces in: just what we've always wanted!

VIEWTIFUL JOE
Absolutely spectacular 2D-yet-not-2D side scrolling single player fighter.

DEF JAM VENDETTA
The wrestling game that appeals to non-grapple fans as well.

VIEWTIFUL JOE 2
There's more of the same inventive gameplay, but there are no substantial changes to the successful formula.

TOP FIVE SHOOTING GAMES



METROID PRIME
Tough as nails shooting-heavy sci-fi adventure.

METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES
Samus Aran takes on the deadly Ing in this solid sequel.

TIMESPLITTERS 2
Classy first-person shooting from the *GoldenEye* boys.

TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT
A great update, though not the revolution that was promised.

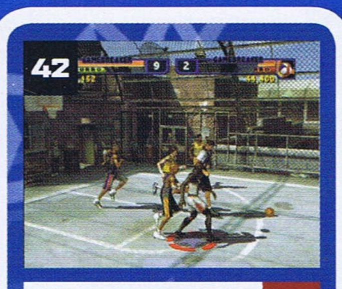
STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER
Looks great and the ropy on-foot sections of the sequel are no more.

41 TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT 88

EA ■ NGC/105

This wasn't the revolution that was promised, instead it was just given a bit of a spring clean and a rethink. However, the multiplayer's still explosively good fun, the trademark humour is in place, it's packed with juicy extras and the Story mode is now a lot more cohesive as a single player game.

42



NBA STREET V2 88

EA ■ NGC/84

This is basketball fitted with EA's successful Street template. You simply don't need a serious basketball sim in your collection – this one is stacks of fun, and unless those real-life stats really are absolutely vital to your enjoyment of a game, *NBA Street*'s got everything you need. Three-on-three action, stunt combos and special moves – all this is crammed into an incredibly fun, fast-moving game.

43 DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT 87

NINTENDO ■ NGC/103

Get the bongos out, it's time to change your gaming habits. Gone are the days of using the D-pad for platformers, who needs them when you've got bongos? This sounds confusing but makes perfect sense in practise. You'll need a Radox bath to soothe your aching arm muscles by the end of it.

44 MADDEN NFL 2005 87

EA ■ NGC/99

The main change to this instalment is the inclusion of the hit stick, which lets you decide how much physical impact your tackles have. Apart from that and a few tweaks to defensive plays and franchise mode, it's pretty much business as usual, with all the usual stats and player updates you'd expect.

45 DEF JAM VENDETTA 87

EA ■ NGC/82

All your favourite rappers get together to give wrestling games a kick up the booty. Start as a mere rookie and fight your way through the likes of DMX, Redman and Ludacris, then you'll have the pick of the ladies – although their blokes won't be happy… Need we mention the great hip-hop soundtrack?

46 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3 87

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/67

Absolutely stinks of PS2 – go on, smell it! – but it's such good fun that it doesn't really matter. You'll find masses of grinds, stunts and a huge range of locations. Come on, this is Tony Hawk. Before he got in with Bam Margera and started clowning around in cars. You know exactly what this is like…

47 LOST KINGDOMS 2 87

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/81

Although nowhere near as good as *Zelda* and *PSO*, *Lost Kingdoms 2* is a beautiful looking card-based RPG – statophiles are going to love building up their decks, collecting new cards to add to it and crunching numbers. It's nicely broken up into a series of small and easily digestible pieces.

48 STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER 87

LUCASARTS ■ NGC/68

Without a doubt the best Star Wars game on Gamecube, both in the way it looks and the way it plays. Take part in the battle of Hoth and whizz your ship down the trench to destroy the Death Star. Note: the whole thing has since been included as a two-player co-op game in *Rogue Squadron III*.

49 VIEWTIFUL JOE 2 87

CAPCOM ■ NGC/105

The sequel to *Viewtiful Joe* is a bit more of the same. There's no revolutionary gameplay here, instead the game seems to take assured and considered steps forward to slightly alter the gameplay and therefore the puzzles involved, although the inclusion of the new character – Silvia – is welcome.

50 BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL 86

UBISOFT ■ NGC/90

Wonderful-looking action adventure with you finding rare animals and tackling an alien invasion. The visuals are stunning and the speech and effects make the grade too. Even the mini-games are fun. The world is huge and detailed, but it is slightly easy and it won't last as long as you'd like.

51 FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES 86

SQUARE ■ NGC/91

Multiplayer RPG for up to four players – but each one will need a GBA and link cable, making this expensive if you're to play it properly. The order in which you pick up spells can be a bit random and the players' shared air bubble can be claustrophobic, but all in all this is good looking and ambitious.

52 WARIO WORLD 86

NINTENDO ■ NGC/83

Punching, pounding, portly fun. That's fun with a capital F (and U and N). The meths-swilling anti-Mario gets his very own game and it's every bit as mad as you'd expect. Gather garlic to boost your strength and embark on a (too short) escapade that combines platforming and fighting. Wah-hah-haaaa!

53 BURNOUT 86

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67

This was an absolutely killer racer in its day, but it was massively improved upon by its sequel. Despite the spectacular crashes, inch-perfect handling and smooth frame rate, we'd still recommend you buy *Burnout 2* because it's got all that and so much more. Not that you'd be unhappy with this, far from it!

54 BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG 86

SEGA ■ NGC/87

Bright and bouncy, you'll have the 'la-la-la' theme tune stuck in your head for days after playing this bizarre, very Japanese platformer. Were it not for the annoyingly glitchy later levels and the poor camera, this would be a classic. Who'd have thought rolling an egg around could be so much fun?

55 PIKMIN 86

NINTENDO ■ NGC/80

Only Shigsy could have come up with a real-time-strategy game set in a garden. Olimar's first visit to Earth is a resource-management revelation. You have 100 Pikmin to carry out your commands as you try to rebuild your ship before you run out of air. It looks as wonderful as it plays, but it's just too short.

56 XIII 86

UBISOFT ■ NGC/88

Unusual graphics, cel-shaded characters and scenes, plus comic-style effects (sequences of images, guns that literally go 'bam') set this FPS apart from the gun-toting crowd. Your sixth sense and a bit of stealth help to vary the pace, and when that's all over there's a great multiplayer mode.

DIRECTORY

The best Gamecube games around

57 NFL 2K3 — 86

SEGA ■ NGC/79

Possibly not as much fun as *Madden*, owing to the amount of work you have to put in to get your 11 bruisers playing together effectively. However, the enormous franchise mode and great sound and graphics make this a decent enough game of American football, if a tad out-of-date.

58 THE LORD OF THE RINGS RETURN OF THE KING — 86

EA ■ NGC/87

Orc-slashing, goblin-gutting goodness featuring your favourite film fellowship. With more playable characters than *The Two Towers* (notably, Gandalf is now in the mix), this decent hack 'n' slash takes you from Helm's Deep through to the defeat of Sauron at the Crack of Doom.

59 NBA LIVE 2004 — 86

EA ■ NGC/88

Under the polished EA Sports surface lies the expected, impressively deep layer of substance. The licensed music and players are supported by a strong bedrock of stats, facts and character creation tools. Overall control has been improved and you've got more offensive options. It's soulless but slick.

60 RESIDENT EVIL ZERO — 85

CAPCOM ■ NGC/78

Controlling two characters (Rebecca and Billy), you shoot your way through the usual hordes of zombies and monsters, solving puzzles to progress. Great cutscenes and in-game visuals mean this looks a treat, and it's got bags of the old Resi atmosphere (a coppery, bloody, fear-filled atmosphere...)

61 MARIO GOLF TOADSTOOL TOUR — 85

NINTENDO ■ NGC/95

For a Mario game there's a surprising lack of Ninty-ness in many of the courses; it's just not as wacky as we'd like. And there's plenty of room for sensible in, say, *Tiger Woods*. That aside, it's easy to pick up the controls and the graphics are crisp and shiny. Plenty of modes and unlockables add longevity.

62 IKARUGA — 85

ATARI ■ NGC/80

Its toughness is the stuff of legend, even on the easy difficulty. Your little spaceship fires white and black projectiles and you have to shoot the black and white nasties with their opposite colour. There are only five of the well-designed levels, but it will take you a while to see them all.

63 FIFA FOOTBALL 2004 — 85

EA ■ NGC/87

The healthy rivalry between FIFA and Pro Evo continues. This is the best football sim on Gamecube (unless you import *Winning Eleven* from Japan), with around 400 licensed, face-scanned players, teams and stadia. The free kick system's been tweaked, and the corner kicks are now menu-driven. It's all here.

64 EXTREME G 3 — 85

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67

This is an underrated gem. It's very fast, the tracks are huge, sprawling, well-designed and you'll find some very cunning uses for the inventive weapons. The only downside to it is that it's a bit soulless and the multiplayer mode's nowhere near as good as it could have been.

65 SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY — 85

UBISOFT ■ NGC/106

This was the game that was supposed to give the Splinter Cell series a kick up the arse; unfortunately that didn't happen. What did happen was a thorough spring cleaning – for example the levels are no longer linear – and as a result it feels much fresher. The addition of a co-op mode is also very welcome.

66 SPIDER-MAN 2 — 84

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/96

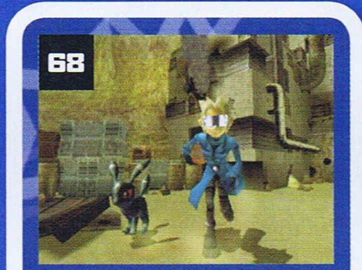
How long have we been waiting for a game that actually makes us feel like a superhero? Well, it's here! Freely swinging through an enormous city, you'll actually feel the joy of doing whatever a spider can. It's not detailed and some of the quests and missions get samey, but still... that swinging!

67 JUDGE DREDD DREDD VS DEATH — 84

VIVENDI ■ NGC/89

Mega City One comes to life. Sadly, it's not an especially *long* life. While it lasts you get to play as ol' chinny himself, solving crimes, nailing perps and eventually tracking down the Dark Judges. The setting and story are spot-on. Apart from the length, the fiddly controls are the only other letdown.

68 POKÉMON COLOSSEUM — 84



NINTENDO ■ NGC/93

The *Pokémon* series gains an RPG! Your task is to save the Shadow Pokémon from Darkness and destroy the powers of the people corrupting the poor critters! Aww. Really though, there's an awful lot of fighting here and you'll need a GBA *Pokémon* game to get the most out of the colosseum mode, which enables you to battle your saved Pokémon from your GBA in glorious 3D. If you're a fan, you'll love this.

69 TALES OF SYMPHONIA — 84

NAMCO ■ NGC/100

This is very much a traditional RPG, and a very good looking one at that. The characters are beautifully designed and the locations are all, without exception, stunning. The only downer in the visual stakes is the relatively ugly overworld. The rubbish, clichéd dialogue will irritate as well.

70 RAYMAN 3 HOODLUM HAVOC — 84

UBISOFT ■ NGC/78

Rayman somehow manages to create a fun platformer, despite the fact that he seems to be stuck in an age when this kind of thing was revolutionary. But it's bright, it's solid and it's got some enjoyable mini-games. It doesn't get boring and the difficulty curve is scaled just right.

71 ISS2 — 83

KONAMI ■ NGC/68

This series was untouchable, but then EA found out and made their FIFA games better. They both ramped up their quality while the GC ISS was left behind in their wake. *ISS2* is a good game, but we were expecting much more of it and unfortunately these expectations weren't met.

72 ROGUE SQUADRON III REBEL STRIKE — 83

LUCASARTS ■ NGC/88

Star Wars is all about screaming TIE fighters and taking on Star Destroyers, not poncing around on foot. The on-foot sections are a bit of a trudge and they ruin the excitement of the rest of the game. But it looks and sounds great, and the two-player *Rogue Leader* rules.

TOP FIVE ADVENTURE /RPGS



ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER
Phenomenal. A reason to own Gamecube in itself.

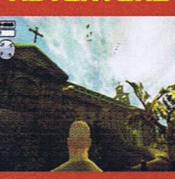
HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE
Not your traditional RPG, this is an endearing, farming treat of a game.

TALES OF SYMPHONIA
A beautiful and epic RPG with the best battle system on the Gamecube.

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE
A number-cruncher that turns epic with a bit of t'internet.

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS
If 'classic' RPGs are your bag, this boy'll be a sackful of joy.

TOP FIVE ACTION ADVENTURE



RESIDENT EVIL 4
Takes the Resident Evil series to new heights by cranking up the action.

HITMAN 2
Compelling assassin sim that kills the competition dead.

SECOND SIGHT
Brilliant psychic stealth-'em-up from the team that brought you *Timesplitters 2.*

MGS: THE TWIN SNAKES
Beautifully updated version of Solid Snake's first outing.

ETERNAL DARKNESS
Dark, psychological horror; exclusive to Gamecube.

73 SERIOUS SAM NEXT ENCOUNTER — 83

TAKE 2 ■ NGC/94

Don't be fooled by the name, this is very silly indeed. For a mere £20 you can spend hours gunning down wave after wave of brightly-coloured aliens across a range of historical locations. Okay, the killing can get a bit relentless, but for a bit of blasting fun, Sam's the man. Never mind the depth, feel the speed!

74 BATEN KAITOS — 83

NAMCO ■ NGC/103

Role-playing adventure with card-based battles. This game is unique and delivers a wonderful, magical and fantastical world; the stunning vistas, towns and interiors are awash with lavish colours. Even the card system works well. Unfortunately it is let down by some stilted and painfully wooden voice acting.

75 FREEDOM FIGHTERS — 83

IO ■ NGC/86

Although this is less serious than *Conflict Desert Storm 2*, this is an enjoyable squad-based third-person shooter. Many of the levels interact with each other, so objectives completed in one mission will effect the events in another. Forget the serious side, this is pure fun.

76 FIFA 2003 — 83

EA ■ NGC/75

This was the turnaround for the FIFA series. After having the football crown stolen by *Pro Evo*, EA sought to re-establish themselves as the kings of the footie game. The result was a remarkably in-depth, fluid and well presented game of football. This is a massive leap forward from previous FIFA games.

77 TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2 — 82

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/100

Tony Hawk rumbles on. This time the graphics have a more cartoony feel, and Story mode features a lot of Bam Margera. Some bits don't belong in a skateboard game, like driving vehicles and walking. Those bits are rubbish. The rest is great, and includes chunks of the first three games – with a timer!

78 SUPER MONKEY BALL 2 — 82



SEGA ■ NGC/78

If games teach you one thing, it's this: out of balls, monkeys probably carry guns and want you dead. Inside balls (WHERE A MONKEY BELONGS!), the little creatures are an absolute delight. The format is the same as the first in the series. The main differences come in the form of the wide array of new and improved mini-games, and over 100 levels in which to roll your orb-imprisoned simian friend around.

79 METAL ARMS GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM — 82

VIVENDI ■ NGC/88

As hard as Ray Winstone in a steel top hat, this robot shoot-'em-up is tough right from the difficult training level. The enemies are extremely resilient and have superb AI, so you need to be accurate and quick. The camera can be awkward and landscape hazards (e.g. water is instantly fatal) can be unfairly harsh.

80 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EP III CARD REV. 82

SEGA ■ NGC/94

This is a new idea for *Phantasy Star Online* – card-based battling. You now have to choose a side (either the Arkz or the Heroside) and do battle with dice and cards. It's best if you are familiar with the original *PSO*, and unfortunately, you'll need a broadband adapter, which can be pretty tough to find.



81 THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT 82

EA ■ NGC/89

Having spent their previous game imprisoned within the confines of their own home, this instalment in EA's massive selling series sees your virtual people released from their house arrest as you send them out into the real world to work. It still doesn't exactly look brilliant and it doesn't sound too great, but as with all games with no absolute goal or plot, it will last you for a very, very long time indeed.

82 NFL STREET 2 81

EA ■ NGC/103

The game that tears up the rulebook and gives you licence to run like hell. This sequel boasts a new ability that allows you to run around the walls *Prince of Persia*-style to gain height when running, catching or passing a human pile-up. A quality package, though probably without mass appeal outside the US.

83 OCARINA OF TIME MASTER QUEST 81

NINTENDO ■ NGC/80

This game is nothing short of a bargain. Although the graphics haven't been updated that doesn't mean that the gameplay isn't up to scratch. This version has tougher dungeons and different puzzles from the original *OOT*. Forget the graphics (it's an old game) and immerse yourself in Rinkydink's earlier outing.

84 AGGRESSIVE INLINE 81

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/72

A top class roller blading sim. Having wheels that stay attached to your feet when they're off the floor means that you can pull off moves like swinging around lampposts. There's even a Career mode. On the negative side, the soundtrack is rubbish and the graphics are a little bland.

85 THE SIMS 81

EA ■ NGC/79

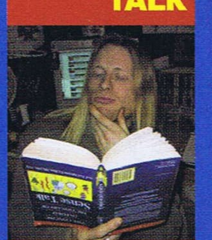
Your Sim has to do all the things a real person would – leave home, make friends, find a partner, eat, sleep and go to the lav. Yet it's all done in a bizarrely addictive way. There's no point to it and there are no objectives, but that's life for you: meaningless, but you want to keep doing it.

86 F1 CAREER CHALLENGE 81

EA ■ NGC/83

Ever wanted to indulge in the life of an F1 driver? Now you can. This is a part of EA's F1 series, but with the addition of an extensive Career mode. There are a series of trials to prove you can handle the F1 disciplines. Then you can get on with the racing part, which looks good, shifts well and handles nicely.

GEORGE W'S SENSE TALK



YOU WHAT?
More and more of our imports are coming from overseas.
George W. Bush

INDEED!
What's the use of sending a $2 million missile into a $10 tent to hit a camel in the butt?
George W. Bush

OH DEAR.
Karyn is with us. A West Texas girl, just like me.
George W. Bush

ERM...
I think we agree, the past is over.
George W. Bush

... BUT...
Please don't look at the part of the glass that is only half full.
George W. Bush

... OH, NEVER MIND...
I'm also not very analytical. You know I don't spend a lot of time thinking about myself, about why I do things.
George W. Bush

Do you have more 'sense' than sense-spewing US president George W. Bush? More than likely! So send 'em in. The best get printed, and if you're really lucky, he may send you a small bag of collected desk smeg, and a 'lightly used' cotton bud.

Send them to Paul at **paul.edwards@futurenet.co.uk** or to Sense Talk at the usual address.

87 NHL 2005 80

EA ■ NGC/99

This is a slick, quick game of hockey. The action's quick and the AI and graphics have been improved, but if you dislike the sport there simply won't be enough here to convince you that it's worthwhile. For the fans though, it's easy to learn and you can rack up huge scores. Good fun.

88 MORTAL KOMBAT DEADLY ALLIANCE 80

MIDWAY ■ NGC/77

The fighting system's been vastly overhauled from earlier *MKs*, although it's far too easy to get an infinite by button mashing. The lack of ring-outs and stage-specific finishers is disappointing. Still, you've got three fighting styles per character, a ton of unlockables and loads of gore. Best with two players.

89 BALDUR'S GATE DARK ALLIANCE 80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/81

Endlessly battling goblins and orcs can get a little tedious, but if you've ever played D&D you'll enjoy levelling up and spending your EXP. However, it's a lazy port from PS2, with slowdown and a jittery frame rate. Nonetheless, the game still looks a treat despite this problem.

90 PAC-MAN VS 80

NAMCO ■ NGC/90

This tiny gem is free – but only when you buy another, inferior full-priced title (*R: Racing Evolution*). While *Pac-Man Vs* isn't a complex title, the four-player mechanic works well. Think of it as a trifle to have fun with between serious gaming sessions. You'll need a GBA and link cable to play it properly.

91 DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY 80

EA ■ NGC/99

Following on directly from the end of *Def Jam Vendetta*, this is yet another wrestling/rap crossover that will appeal to fans of both genres. The wrestling is slickly executed and there's a massive amount of unlockables and extras to keep you occupied. Unfortunately, it is ruined by a poor frame rate.

92 THE SIMPSONS HIT AND RUN 80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/87

After a succession of gaming stinkers, the Simpsons take a tip from the Grand Theft Auto series and set about stealing cars, taking on missions and doling out a bit of cartoon-style violence. It's certainly not original by any stretch of the imagination, but it is loads of fun.

93 MARIO PARTY 5 80

NINTENDO ■ NGC/89

Ain't no party like a Mario Party; except all the other parties in the series. This console-based boardgame is one of the best yet, but is still really only good as a multiplayer game. The board game bits are a little slow and dull, but the mini-games (popping other players' inner tubes, mech fights...) are hilarious.

94 DIE HARD VENDETTA 80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/74

WARNING: Do not play this in earshot of old people; the swearing on display here may offend their sensitive ears. However, there's a fair bit of gunplay, excellent set-pieces and cheesy dialogue. This has plenty of all three, all hampered by cumbersome controls and frustrating sections.

95 POOL PARADISE 80

IGNITION ■ NGC/92

Not just UK pool – poke your cue at eight-ball, nine-ball and stunt tables too if that's what fills your triangle. Using the analogue stick to power your cue is a nice touch, and darts and *Dropzone* feature as mini-games. Earth shattering? No. But it's all solid and playable, as you'd expect.

96 PUYO POP FEVER 80

SEGA ■ NGC/91

Puyo Pop – if you've never heard of it you must have started gaming all of a week ago. It's quite simple: match coloured blobs that drop from the top of the screen and – hey presto! – they disappear. How radical is that? The two-player mode's a whole lot more fun than you'd think, too.

97 HARRY POTTER & THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN 79

EA ■ NGC/95

A Potter title that actually works pretty well as a game! Whatever next? The way you use the differing skills of Harry, Ron and Hermione to solve problems adds interest to a rather thin storyline. The controls are a bit iffy, but the atmosphere's spot-on. Not just for Potter fans.

98 NFL STREET 79

EA ■ NGC/90

American football isn't quite brought to the masses by *NFL Street*. Even though the strategy's dumbed down it's still very stoppy-starty and so can be slightly drawn-out. We'd also have liked a custom play editor or a wacky training mode to help players get to grips with the basic plays.

99 BEACH SPIKERS 79

SEGA ■ NGC/72

Not to everyone's taste – although developers AM2 have at least abandoned the jiggles and concentrated on making a proper sports sim. You'll need lightning-quick reactions and good team control to succeed. Its single-player appeal is limited, so you'll need to play with friends to get the most from it.

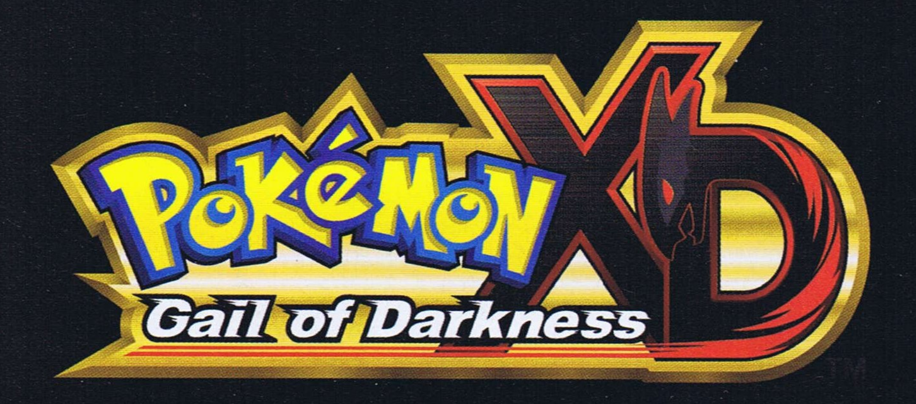
100 CAPCOM VS SNK 2 EO 79

CAPCOM ■ NGC/72

Enormous depth and an avalanche of play modes give the game longevity – Versus mode will last you for ages – but unfortunately it's pretty ugly and it doesn't work well with the GC's joypad (specials on the C-stick?), so you'll really need to shell out for an arcade stick to get the best out of this.



ANYONE GOT A LAMP?





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OLDEST ENEMY!

NINTENDO DS™

